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Jacopo Camagni

NOMEN OMEN™

Volume III ◆ As the World Falls Down

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NOMEN OMEN

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THE PANCAKES RITUAL
(an origin story)

In the fall of 2008, I flew for the first time to New York, destination Comicon, for the celebration of the winners of the Chester Quest, the competition organized by Marvel Comics to find new talented artists, which marked the beginning of my career as an overseas artist...

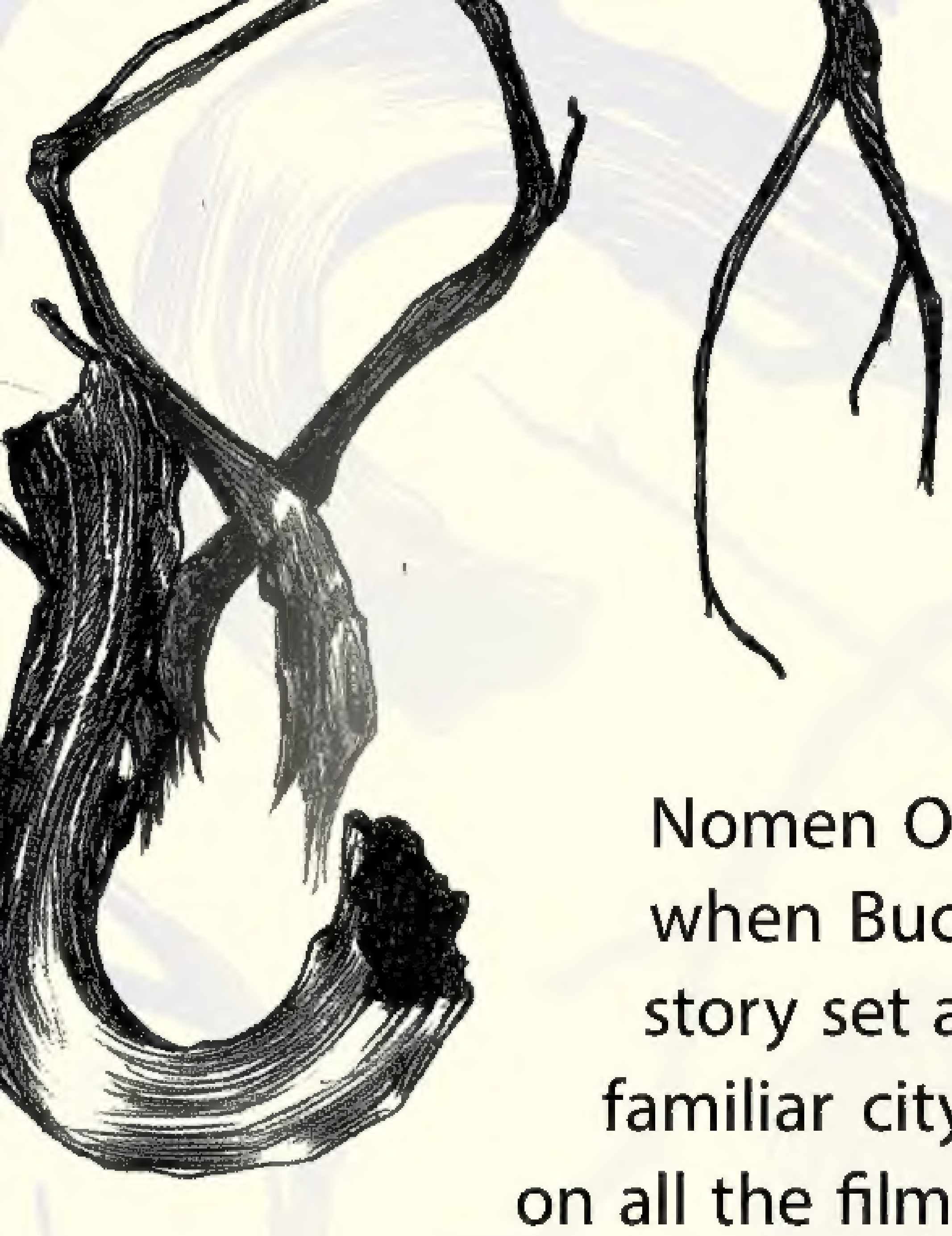
Obviously, I was very excited because soon I was going to start working on comics for a big publisher. Legs trembled at the fulfillment of a dream.

During the first day of the fair, I finally had the opportunity to meet Becky Cloonan in person, the author who, together with Bruce Timm and Jamie Hewlett, contributed significantly to my passion, to the definition of my style, to the growth of my imagination.

We had known each other virtually for some time through the Deviantart website, the virtual place where designers at the time exhibited their works. I loved her gothic imagery populated by female figures (who all looked like witches), wolves, knights, and fantastic creatures. I loved her stroke, those dirty and dark signs that combined with original and refined designs.

I was excited at the idea of meeting her face to face, she was already working for the big names in the industry and I was looking shyly at my American path. I remember that we had made an appointment at the entrance to the fair. Becky was exactly as I had imagined her: nice, very rock.

We decided to go for lunch together to tell each other about our lives in a quiet place. It was the Skylight Diner, which she knew and which was to become the place where this whole story began. I still did not know, but later the memories and the atmosphere of that day would be the vital spark for the saga you are reading.



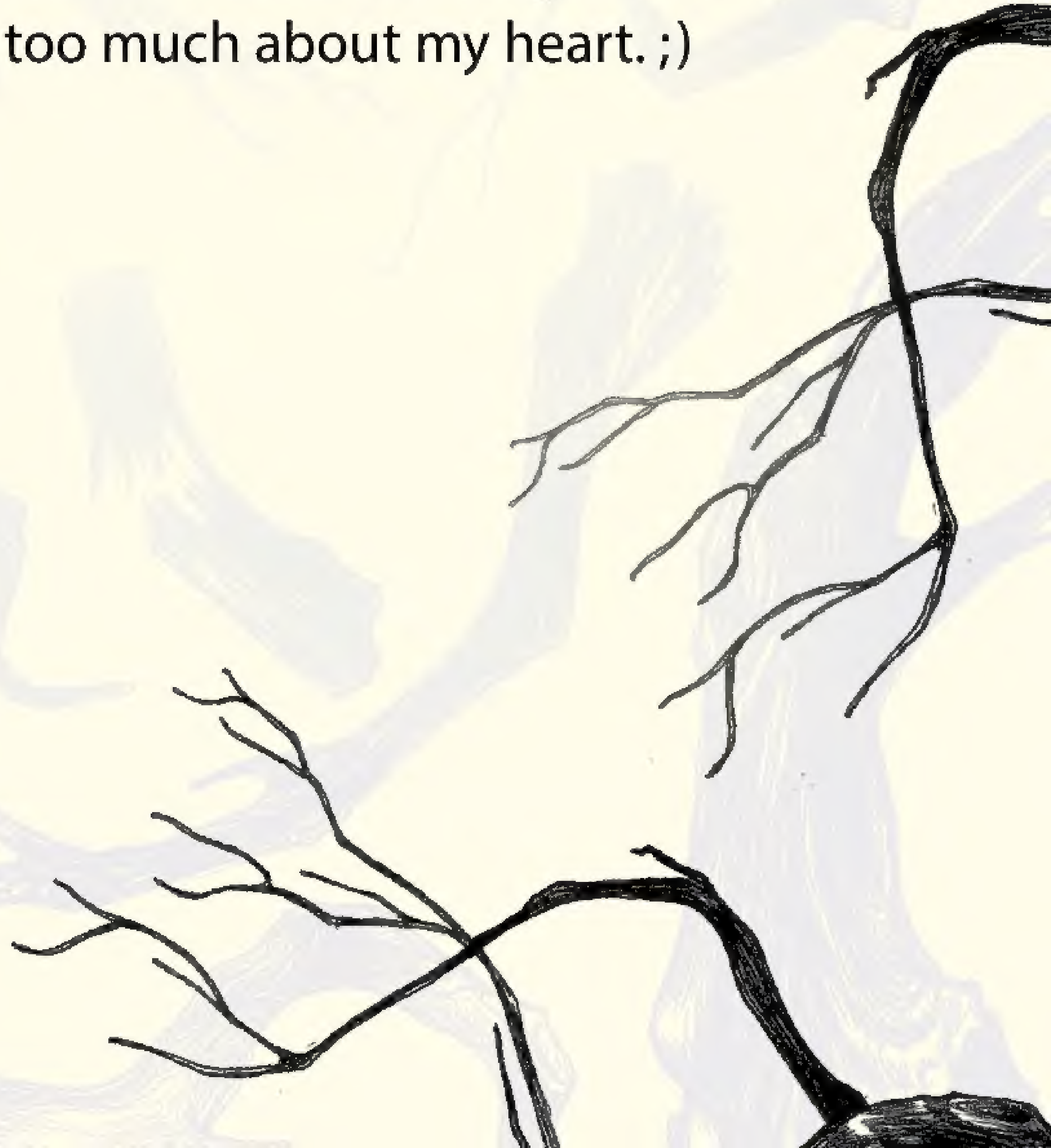
Nomen Omen was born in Manhattan, a few nights after that meeting, when Bucci and I found ourselves fantasizing together about a fantasy story set all around us. It was inevitable. We were out and about in that familiar city we were visiting for the first time. A false memory that fed on all the films and series that had shown it to us countless times since our childhood. We were full of that creative energy that only fair days can give, it was as if each location revealed the whole course of events as we visited them.

And it was absolutely natural, like reading a book. Except that the text was made up of intersections and various people, buildings and parks. What better place to tell a story about Incarnate Stories than Manhattan? It was and still remains the metropolis where people from all over the world converge, with their load of stories, traditions, hopes, and fantasies. I remember feeling carried away as if I could perceive this flow of different lives ready to meet and mingle. As if Manhattan itself was an entity unto itself, alive and familiar. After all, it lives in our imagination, who can say they don't know it at all?

The ideas came like a sudden tide, unable to stop, ready to permeate every memory. History almost wrote itself. It must have been the meeting with Becky or the pancakes at Skylight Diner. The thrill of Comicon or the colors of Central Park with its ravenous robins. Or the smell of the subway, the codes hidden in the graffiti, or the temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum. The puddles that reflected the lights of Broadway or the Chinese herb shops... I really can't list all the ingredients of that spell. I only know that something has taken possession of me and Marco, and has asked us in a loud voice to give it life on paper, to tell the story of our Becky and that of an imaginary Manhattan dangerously similar to the real one.

Today, after so many years, every time I go back to New York, I can't help but stop by that diner, to order a giant portion of pancakes like that first time. Although now, to be honest, I am careful not to enter the toilet. I care too much about my heart. ;)

Jacopo Camagni
Rome, April 2021



Chapter 11

DEATH... TO THOSE YOU'D HAPPILY SET ABLAZE, THE RARE FEW FOR WHOM YOU'D RESERVE YOUR SOFT. POWERFUL. KISS. BELL AFTER BELL YOU DANCE, BARELY VEILING THE DAUGHTER OF YULE RICH IN HER LUST.
WHAT ACT, SO ATROCIOUS AND WICKED, HAS SHE ACCOMPLISHED TO BE DENIED YOUR FATAL FAVOR? IN WHAT WAY HAS HER WORK SO OFFENDED YOU, AS TO NOT DESERVE THAT GRACE WHICH YOU, MUNIFICENT, SO PROUDLY BESTOW UPON MORTALS?
UNDEFEATED QUEEN, HECATE CHTHONIA, WHAT DARK PATH HAVE YOU DIVINED DEEP WITHIN YOUR GLORIOUS GUTS FOR SHE WHO DARES CROSS THE FATAL LABYRINTH?

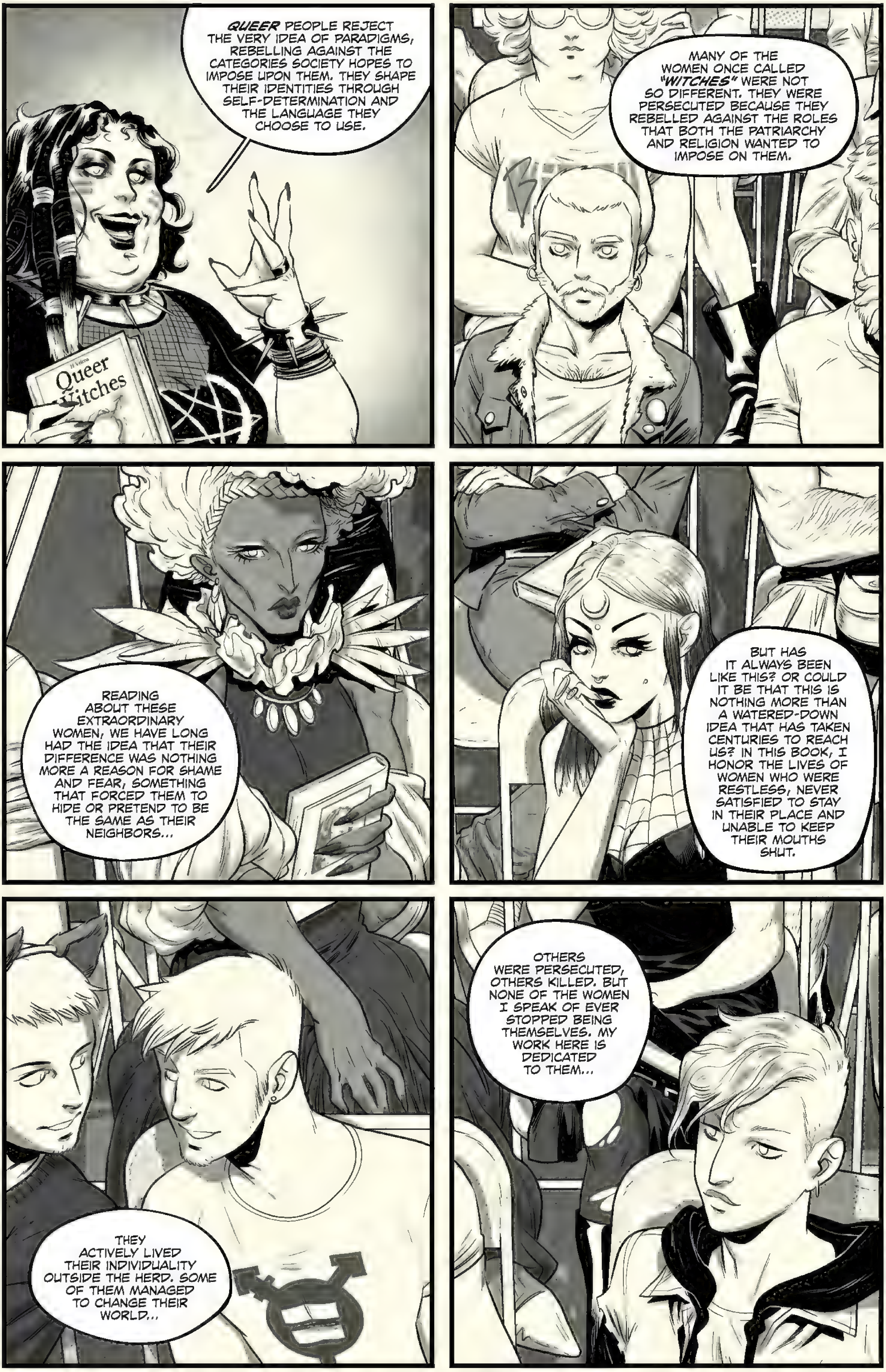
THE COURT OF THE FAIRIES, CENTRAL PARK.
THIS IS IT, THE FINAL STROKE OF MIDNIGHT ON OCTOBER 31ST.
IN ONE MINUTE, MY LIFE MIGHT END. STILL, I'VE NEVER FELT THIS MUCH--
WITCH... NNGH--
SILENCE!
DONG

AAAARGH!
TZOK
TZOK
TZOK
TZOK
CURSED, YOU ARE...
...FOREVER!
HERE, YOU... LITTLE WITCH, I THINK...
...I'LL START WITH YOU.

PEOPLE LIKE *YOU* ALWAYS *GET AWAY* WITH IT...
...BUT NOT *THIS* TIME.
Y-YOU'RE N-NOT... *NGHHH...*
SSSH
GOODBYE FOREVER, REBECCA KUMAR.
AH!
TUTUM

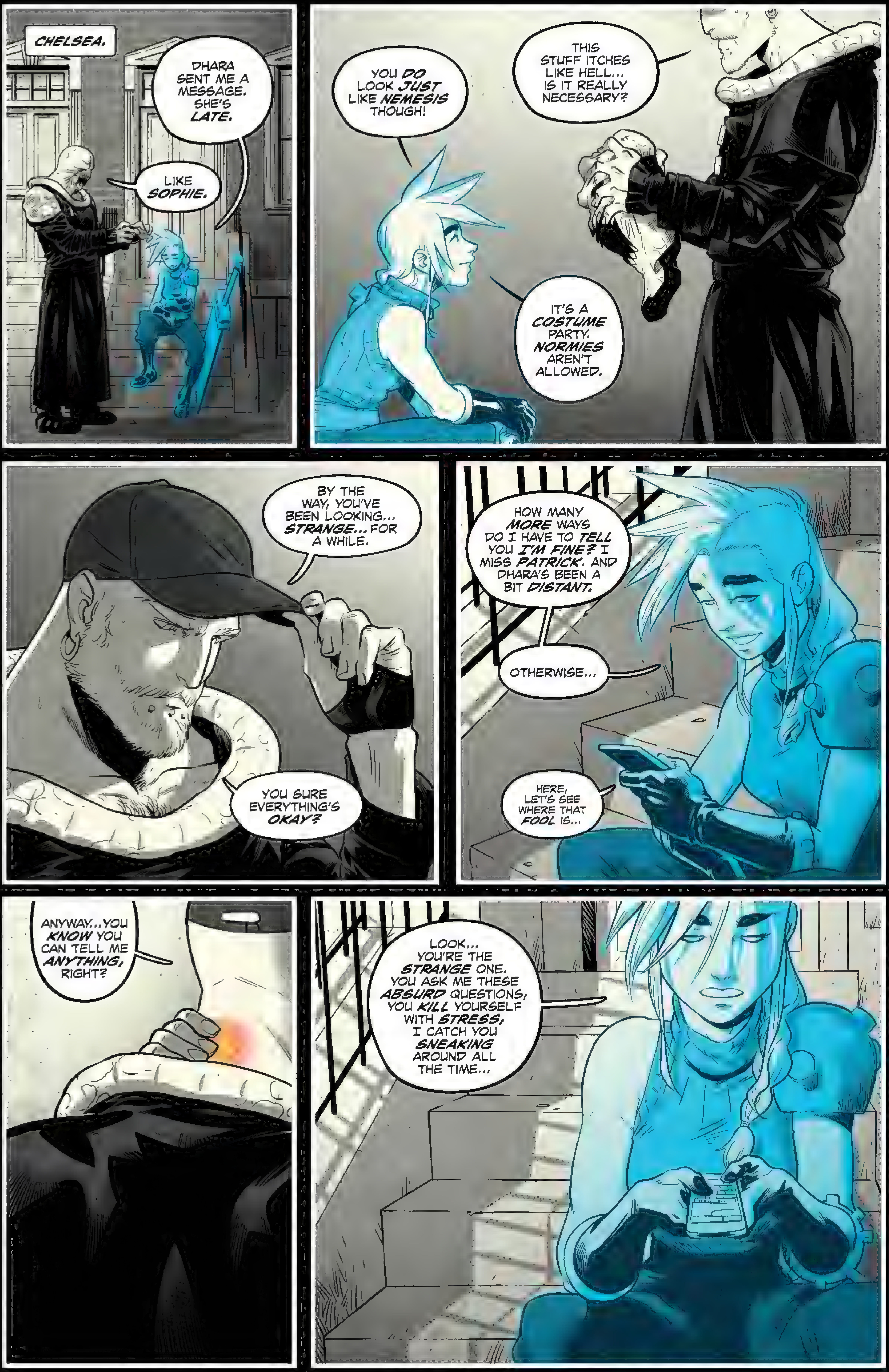
DO YOU FEEL IT NOW?!
MEDEA IS GOING TO CRUSH YOUR HEART!
JUST GIVE THE *ORDER,* MY LORD...
I *KNEW* IT'D END LIKE THIS...BUT THAT'S *FINE,* IT DOESN'T *MATTER.*
FZWROOSH
TZOK
YOU RIPPED MY HEART OUT.
YOU TOOK MY BEST FRIEND.
YOU TORE APART *EVERYTHING...* EVERYTHING I *HAD!*
YOU'RE GOING TO SUFFER FOREVER, TARANIS!

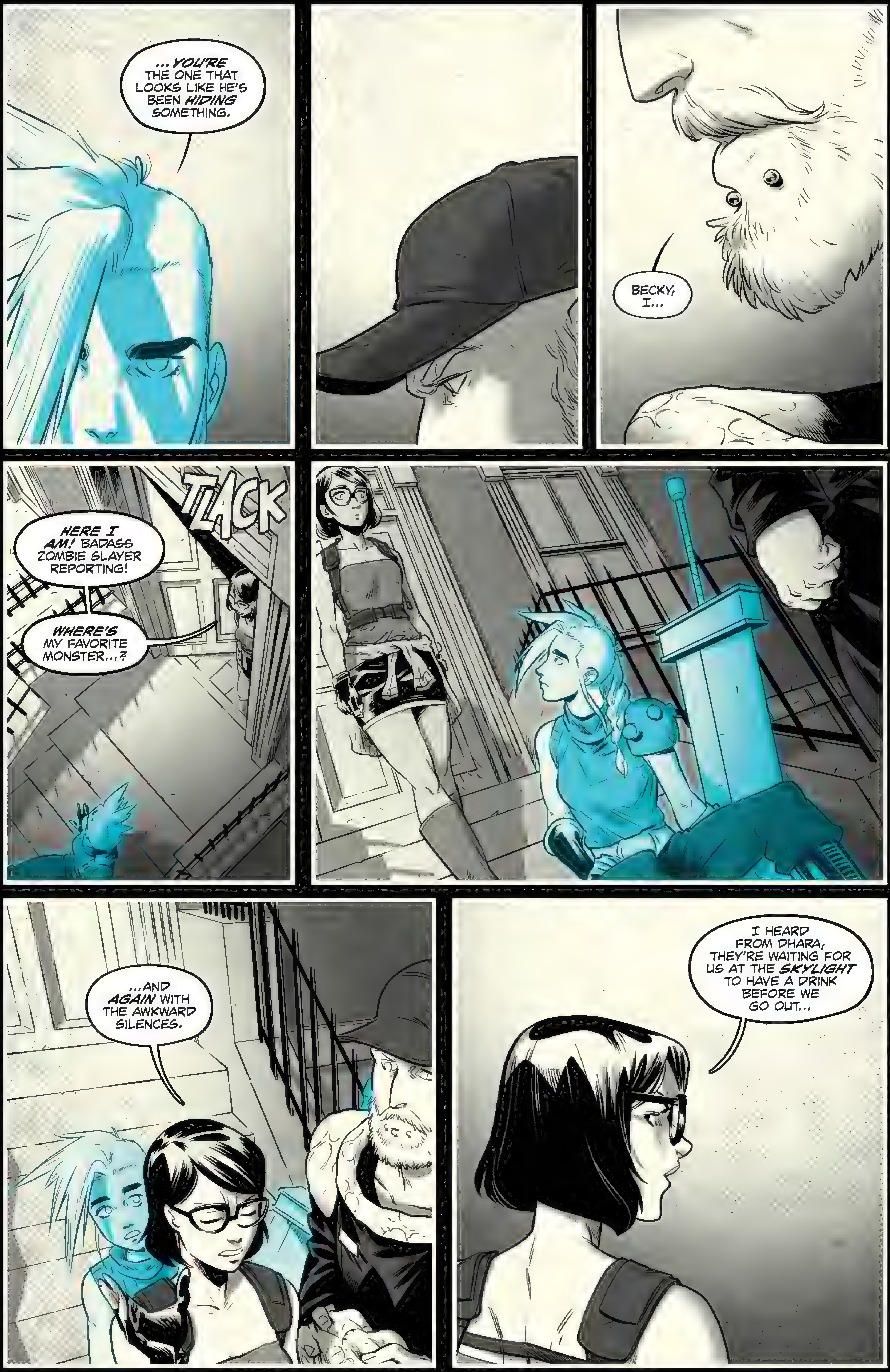
GREENWICH VILLAGE.
THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TO OUR SPECIAL LITTLE NIGHT PARTY. IT'S BECOME SOMETHING OF A TRADITION...
JUST AS EVERY YEAR WE GATHER TO CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN IN HONOR OF ALL THE WOMEN WHO'VE BEEN PERSECUTED FOR THEIR OWN UNIQUE NATURE.
THE BARN OWL
INDEPENDENT, COMMUNITY MINDED AND WOMEN-OWNED BOOKSTORE
BUT I THINK IT'S TIME I GAVE THE FLOOR TO HELENA, WHO'S HERE TONIGHT TO PRESENT HER NEW BOOK, QUEER WITCHES.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE SEEN EACH OTHER...
BUT HOW COULD I MISS THIS? I MEAN...WHAT HARM COULD COME FROM LEAVING THE CLINIC FOR ONE NIGHT?
...AND BECKY?
TOO SMART. TOO GOOD, AS USUAL... AND ALWAYS WITH HER MIND SOMEWHERE ELSE. SHE'S EXACTLY LIKE CLAIRE...
WILL SHE JOIN US AT SOME POINT?
SURE, SHE CARES A LOT.
WHO COULD BLAME HER... THE PLACE IS PACKED!
THANKS TO MY PUNCH.


QUEER PEOPLE REJECT THE VERY IDEA OF PARADIGMS, REBELLING AGAINST THE CATEGORIES SOCIETY HOPES TO IMPOSE UPON THEM. THEY SHAPE THEIR IDENTITIES THROUGH SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE LANGUAGE THEY CHOOSE TO USE.
Queer Witches
MANY OF THE WOMEN ONCE CALLED "WITCHES" WERE NOT SO DIFFERENT. THEY WERE PERSECUTED BECAUSE THEY REBELLED AGAINST THE ROLES THAT BOTH THE PATRIARCHY AND RELIGION WANTED TO IMPOSE ON THEM.
READING ABOUT THESE EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN, WE HAVE LONG HAD THE IDEA THAT THEIR DIFFERENCE WAS NOTHING MORE A REASON FOR SHAME AND FEAR, SOMETHING THAT FORCED THEM TO HIDE OR PRETEND TO BE THE SAME AS THEIR NEIGHBORS...
BUT HAS IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS? OR COULD IT BE THAT THIS IS NOTHING MORE THAN A WATERED-DOWN IDEA THAT HAS TAKEN CENTURIES TO REACH US? IN THIS BOOK, I HONOR THE LIVES OF WOMEN WHO WERE RESTLESS, NEVER SATISFIED TO STAY IN THEIR PLACE AND UNABLE TO KEEP THEIR MOUTHS SHUT.
THEY ACTIVELY LIVED THEIR INDIVIDUALITY OUTSIDE THE HERD. SOME OF THEM MANAGED TO CHANGE THEIR WORLD...
OTHERS WERE PERSECUTED, OTHERS KILLED. BUT NONE OF THE WOMEN I SPEAK OF EVER STOPPED BEING THEMSELVES. MY WORK HERE IS DEDICATED TO THEM...

HELL'S KITCHEN.
NO, JOELL! *I WON'T LOWER MY VOICE.*
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORS.
DHARA... IT WAS *JUST* ONE QUESTION.
...THE *WRONG* QUESTION.
HEARD, RAKIM.
BUT HOW IS IT POSSIBLE *I'M* THE ONE WHO *ALWAYS* HAS TO PICK HER WORDS?
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
SWAT
LOOK, ALL I WANTED WAS TO KNOW *WHAT* TO SAY. THEY'RE *YOUR* BEST FRIENDS, AFTER ALL...
RIGHT. AND THEY'RE THE FIRST PEOPLE WHO SHOULD KNOW WHO AND *WHAT* WE *TRULY* ARE.
BUT IF *WE* DON'T EVEN KNOW THAT...
WE'RE CERTAINLY NOT *"JUST FRIENDS,"* AS HE SAID EARLIER.
THIS *STORY* IS A MESS, NO DOUBT...
...BUT IT'S *NOT* A MESS BECAUSE OF *ME.*
SWAT

WE'VE BEEN GOING ON LIKE THIS FOR *MONTHS...*
...AND I FEEL LIKE THE MOST MESSED UP GIRL...AND THE *LUCKIEST* GIRL IN THE WORLD.
BUT YOU'VE *GOT* TO JUST GET IT OVER WITH. YOU'RE NOT *JUST* IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH ME. THERE'S *SOMETHING* BETWEEN YOU TWO.
HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED IT OUT YET?!
FUCK IT...I HAVE TO START MY MAKEUP *OVER* FROM SCRATCH.
SLAM
SHE *JUST* TOLD US THAT...
YUP.
PAT
SWAT
LOOK, YOU *DON'T* HAVE TO--
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
SHUT UP, DWARF.
SWAT


CHELSEA.
DHARA SENT ME A MESSAGE. SHE'S *LATE.*
LIKE *SOPHIE.*
THIS STUFF ITCHES LIKE HELL... IS IT REALLY NECESSARY?
YOU *DO* LOOK *JUST* LIKE *NEMESIS* THOUGH!
IT'S A *COSTUME* PARTY. *NORMIES* AREN'T ALLOWED.
BY THE WAY, YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING... *STRANGE...* FOR A WHILE.
YOU SURE EVERYTHING'S *OKAY?*
HOW MANY *MORE* WAYS DO I HAVE TO *TELL* YOU *I'M FINE?* I MISS *PATRICK.* AND DHARA'S BEEN A BIT *DISTANT.*
OTHERWISE...
HERE, LET'S SEE WHERE THAT *FOOL* IS...
ANYWAY...YOU *KNOW* YOU CAN TELL ME *ANYTHING,* RIGHT?
LOOK... YOU'RE THE *STRANGE* ONE. YOU ASK ME THESE *ABSURD* QUESTIONS, YOU *KILL* YOURSELF WITH *STRESS,* I CATCH YOU *SNEAKING* AROUND ALL THE TIME...


...YOU'RE THE ONE THAT LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN HIDING SOMETHING.
BECKY, I...
TLACK
HERE I AM! BADASS ZOMBIE SLAYER REPORTING!
WHERE'S MY FAVORITE MONSTER...?
...AND AGAIN WITH THE AWKWARD SILENCES.
I HEARD FROM DHARA, THEY'RE WAITING FOR US AT THE SKYLIGHT TO HAVE A DRINK BEFORE WE GO OUT...

RUMMMB
AUSTRI... SOMETHING IS HAPPENING.
RRUMMMBLEE
RUMMMBLEE
HELP ME, BECKY... PLEASE. I'M GOING CRAZY...

O NIGHT, FAITHFUL KEEPER OF MYSTERIES...GOLDEN STARS, WHICH SHINE WITH THE GLOW OF THE DAY AND NIGHT ALIKE...
HECATE, WHO ARE
MY ENTERPRI
RT OF MAGICIAN
...AND YOU, TRIPLE-BODIED HECATE, WHO ARE AWARE OF MY ENTERPRISE AND AID WITH SPELLS AND THE ART OF MAGICIANS...
O EARTH, FROM WHICH THE MAGICIANS PROCURE PRODIGIOUS HERBS...AND YOU BREEZES, WINDS AND MOUNTAINS, YOU RIVERS AND LAKES, ALL OF THE WOODS, ALL OF THE NIGHT, ALL OF YOU... ASSIST ME!
TZOK
IT IS THANKS TO YOU, WHENEVER I WANT, THE RIVERS RETURN TO THEIR SOURCE, EVEN TO THE AMAZEMENT OF THE WATCHING BANKS!
BY MAGIC I UPSET THE CALM SEA AND CALM THE STORMY ONE, I CLEAR THE CLOUDS AND THICKEN THEM...I DRIVE AWAY THE WINDS OR URGE THEM!
DAWN PALES WITH MY POISO

RECITING MY FORMULAS, I TEAR OPEN THE VIPERS' THROATS...
ARCADIA
AND FROM THEIR LAND I ANIMATE AND MOVE THE STONES AS IF THEY WERE ALIVE!
O NIGHT, FAITHFUL KEEPER OF MYSTERIES, GOLDEN STARS, WHICH SHINE WITH THE GLOW OF THE DAY AND NIGHT ALIKE; I AM MEDEA!
AND YOU, TRIPLE-BODIED
AND AID
O EARTH, FROM WHICH THE MA
PRODIGIOUS HERBS; AND YOU BREEZES, WINDS AND MOUNTAINS, YOU RIVERS
THE WOODS, ALL OF THE NIGHT, ALL OF YOU, ASSIST ME! IT I
I CLEAR THE CLOUDS AND THICKEN THEM; I DRIVE AWAY
I ALSO ATTRACT YOU TO ME, MOON,
TO MY SPELLS, AND THE
THE BRONZES OF TEMESA RELIEVE
THE SERPENTS TO FIGHT EACH OTHER
OAKS AND WOODS, RISE! MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS, TREMBLE!
SOIL AND DEPTH, SHOUT! SHADOWS, MY BELOVED...WAKE FROM YOUR TOMBS!

MY... *MY...* NNNGH--
THANKS TO YOU, WHENEVER I WANT, THE RIVERS RETURN TO T
I ASKED *MEDEA* TO MAKE SURE *YOUR HEART* WAS *FIRST.* THE ONE FROM WHICH *MY GREAT DREAM WILL ORIGINATE.*
ISN'T IT *POETIC?* YOU AND ME...*FINALLY* UNITED BY THE ETERNAL MARRIAGE OF *DEATH...*
THE WINDS OR URGE THEM; RECITING MY FORMULAS, I T
NO...*NO!* PATRICK... FER...MY...
DIDN'T YOU WANT TO *STOP* YOUR SUFFERING? OR FIND YOUR FRIEND, THE ONE WHO *DIED* IN THAT *ACCIDENT?*
DON'T YOU STILL WANT TO SEE FER DOIRICH AGAIN?

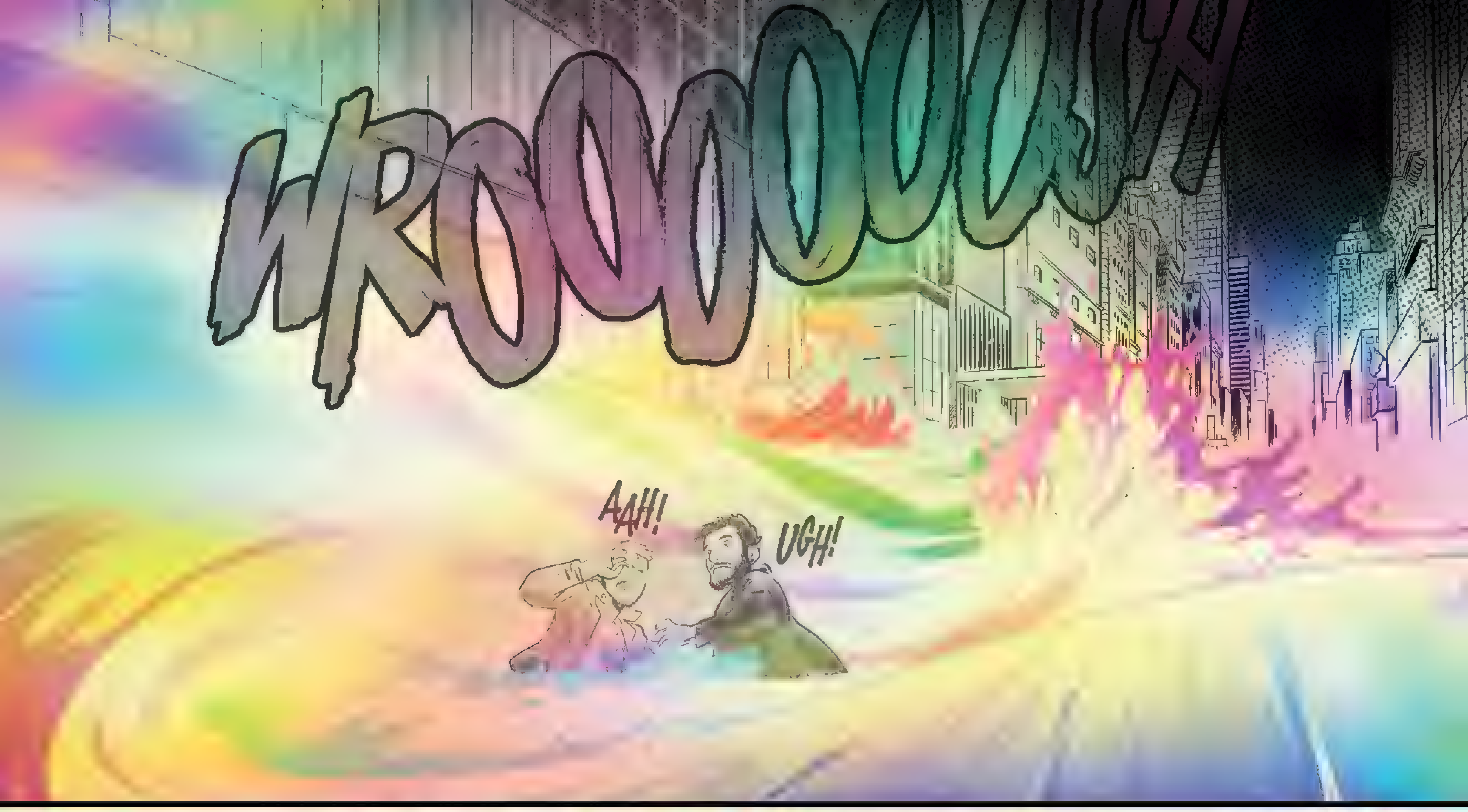
NO, IT *CAN'T* END LIKE THIS...
HEIR SOURCE, EVE AMAZEMENT OF THE WATCHING BA
...I SEE *WORDS,* I SEE...THERE ARE *NAMES... COLORS...* I CAN...
NONE OF THAT MATTERS ANYMORE. IT'S OVER.
REST NOW, REBECCA...
EAR OPEN THE VIPERS' THROATS, AND FROM THEIR LAND
...AND MAY THE EARTH WELCOME YOU.

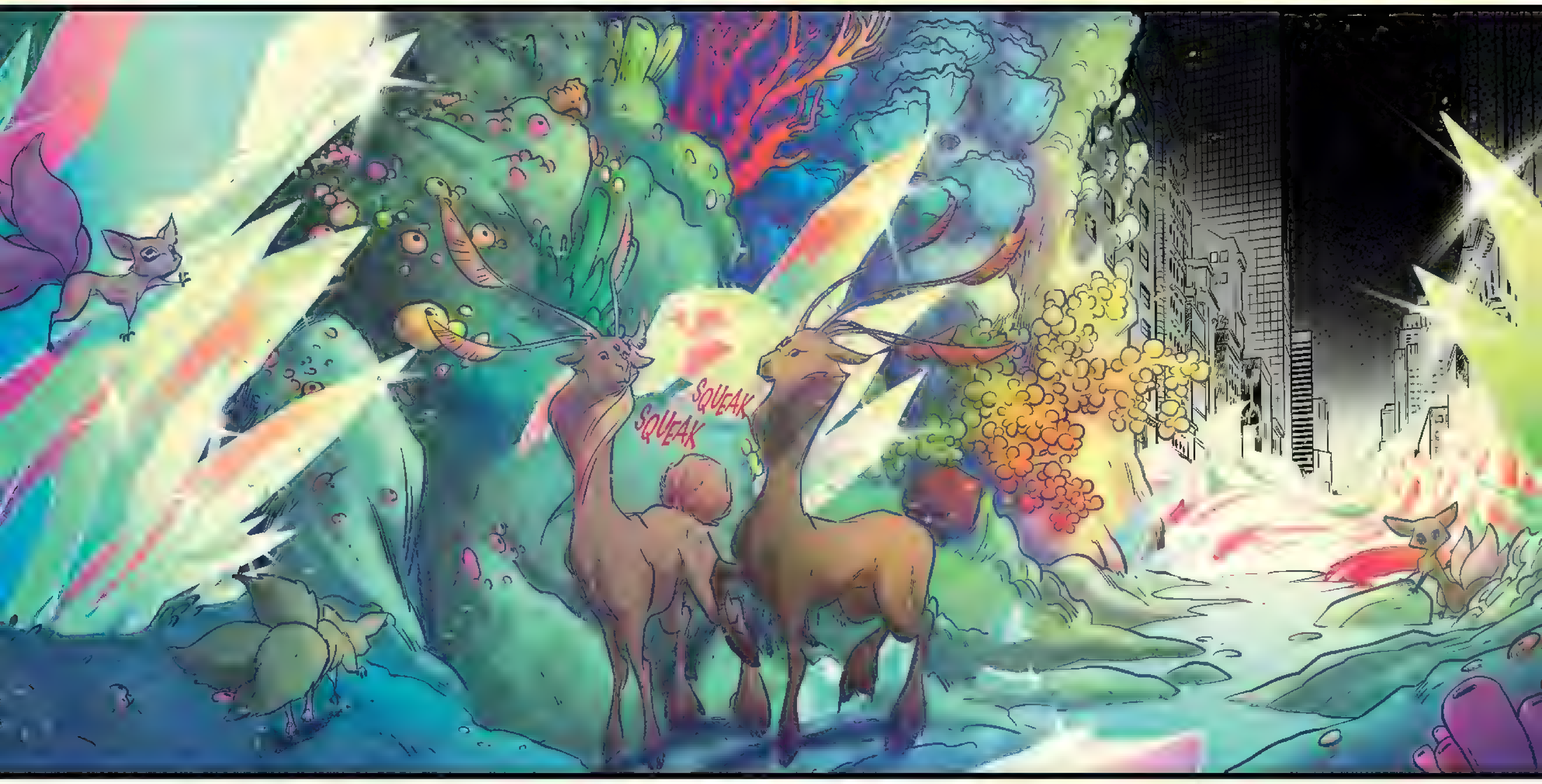
KS; BY MAGIC I UPSET THE CALM SEA CALM THE STORMY ONE
ANIMATE AND MOVE THE STONES AS IF THEY WERE ALI
PPUMMMBLE

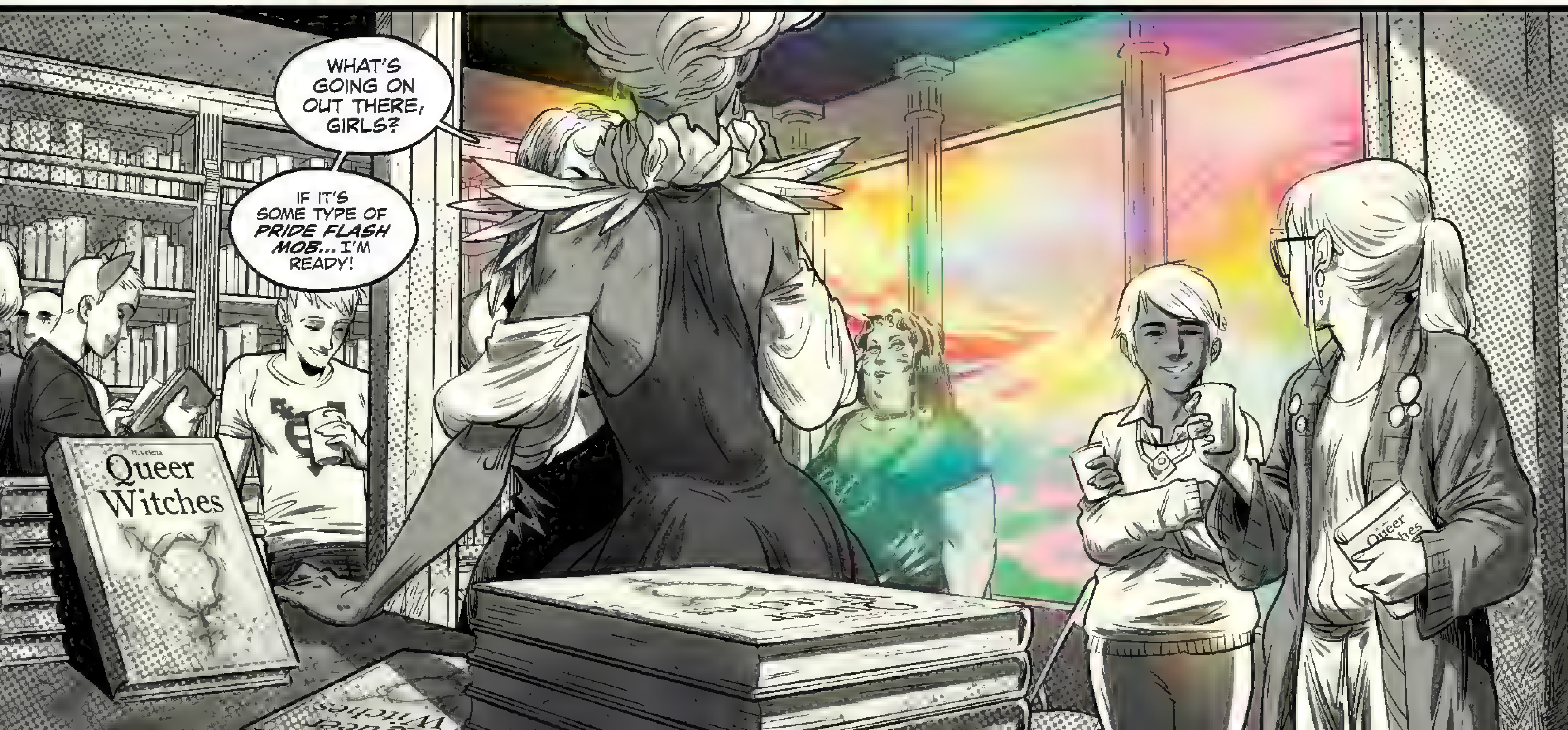
OH... POOR LITTLE KING, I FEEL YOU FADING AWAY... FINALLY, THE CURSE OF THE WITCH HAS BEEN FULFILLED.
AND AT LAST... THE HEART OF THE NEW CITY IS READY.
RRUMMMMBLE
GOODBYE, MANHATTAN...
WHAT IS THAT? IS SOMEONE SHOOTING OFF FIREWORKS?
OH, FUCK...

...AND RISE AGAIN, *ARCADIA!*

RRRUMMMBLEE


WROOOOOOSH!
AAH!
UGH!


SQUEAK
SQUEAK


WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE, GIRLS?
IF IT'S SOME TYPE OF *PRIDE FLASH MOB*... I'M READY!
Queer Witches
Queer Witches

MY LOVE... WHAT ARE THOSE *LIGHTS?*
I HAVE *NO* CLUE.
GET EVERYONE TOGETHER!
IS IT THAT STRANGE AURORA BOREALIS AGAIN?
MAYBE...OR *MAYBE* IT'S LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO *US AT YOSEMITE!*
WE KNEW WE'D HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS SOONER OR LATER...
GIRLS... THERE'S *NO ROAD* IN THE BACK. NOT ANYMORE.
DASH
CLOSE EVERYTHING! FIND SOMETHING TO BARRICADE THE WINDOWS!
THEN WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?
FINDING BECKY.
...IF I KNEW SHE WAS *SAFE,* THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH.
T-THERE'S NO SIGNAL.

NDEPENDENT, COMMUNITY M
AND WOMEN ED BOOKST

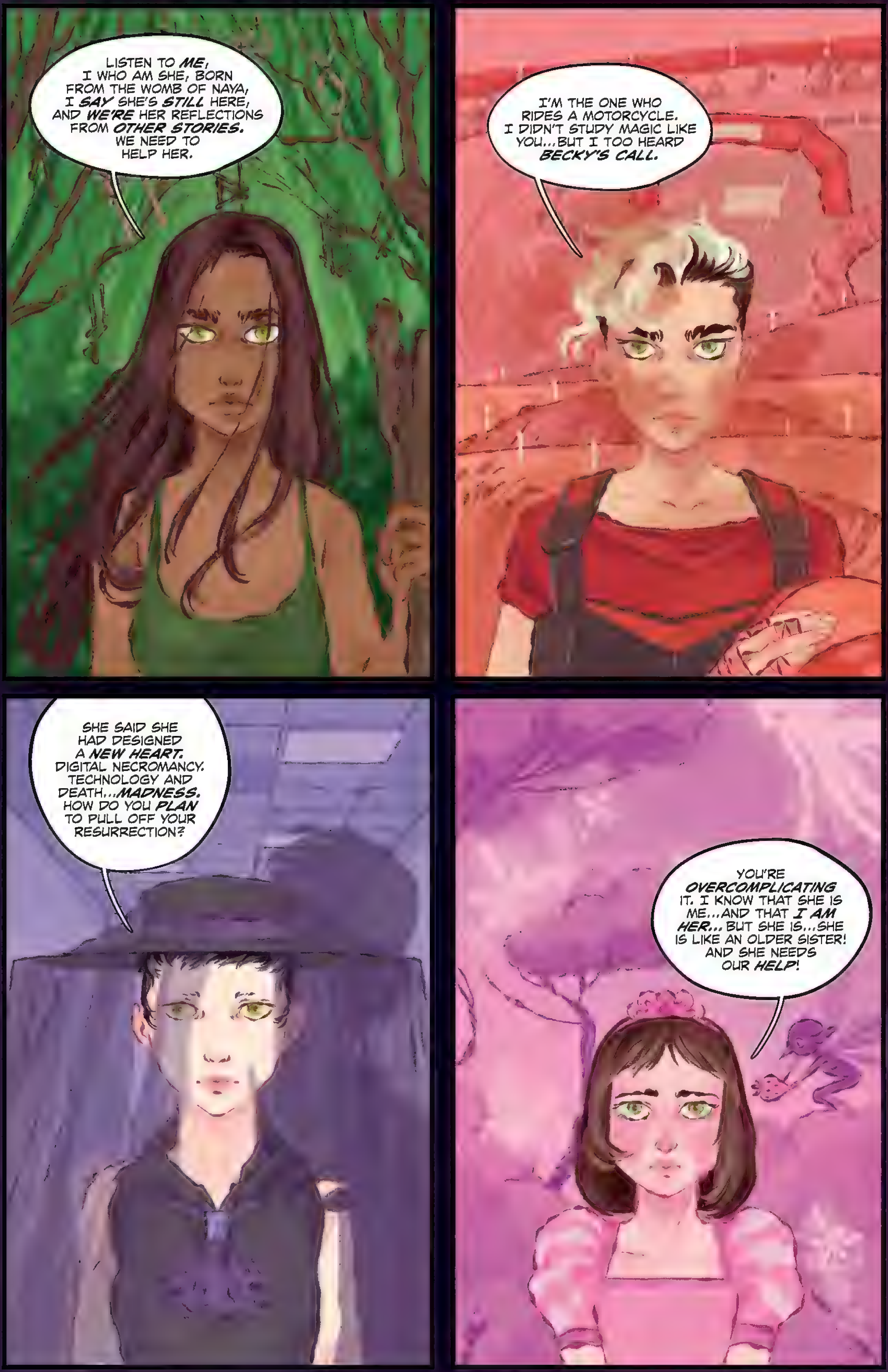
MIDTOWN COMICS
"IT LOOKS LIKE THE *STREET'S* BECOME A *CANYON...* HOW MANY *BUILDINGS* EVEN SURVIVED THIS...*THING?*
"...AND HOW MANY *PEOPLE?* WHAT *HAPPENED* TO THE PEOPLE ON THE *STREET?*
"...WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE *INSIDE* ALL THE *BUILDINGS?*
YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
"WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT'S *HAPPENING* OUT THERE... HOW TO *PROTECT* OURSELVES...AND WHERE TO *HIDE.*
"IT *COULDN'T* HAVE BEEN A NATURAL DISASTER, NOT THIS...THIS ISN'T ANY *NATURE* WE KNOW OF.
STOCKINGS
STORE ACTIVIST CENTER FAIR TRADE CAFÉ BLUES
"IT'S SOMETHING *DIFFERENT...* JUST LIKE THE NIGHT *BECKY* CAME INTO OUR LIVES."

MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS.
FAREWELL, MY BELOVED KINGDOM.
FAREWELL.

WHAT THE FUCK...
WAIT... YOU SEE IT TOO?!
EVERYONE INSIDE... NOW!

Chapter 12

SOMEWHERE...
WOOOOSH
SHE *REALLY* DID IT...
...WE CAN'T *DENY* THAT THE GIRL HAS TALENT.
THE FIRST WITCH TO *BACK UP* HER HEART.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND... BECKY, SHE'S--
DEAD, NO DOUBT.


LISTEN TO *ME*, I WHO AM SHE, BORN FROM THE WOMB OF NAYA, I *SAY* SHE'S *STILL* HERE, AND *WE'RE* HER REFLECTIONS FROM *OTHER STORIES*. WE NEED TO HELP HER.
I'M THE ONE WHO RIDES A MOTORCYCLE. I DIDN'T STUDY MAGIC LIKE YOU...BUT I TOO HEARD *BECKY'S CALL*.
SHE SAID SHE HAD DESIGNED A *NEW HEART*. DIGITAL NECROMANCY. TECHNOLOGY AND DEATH...*MADNESS*. HOW DO YOU *PLAN* TO PULL OFF YOUR RESURRECTION?
YOU'RE *OVERCOMPLICATING* IT. I KNOW THAT SHE IS ME...AND THAT *I AM HER*... BUT SHE IS...SHE IS LIKE AN OLDER SISTER! AND SHE NEEDS OUR *HELP*!

THEN COME *FORWARD*, SISTERS. HERE, WE *STAND* AT THE CROSSROADS OF OUR ESSENCES. WHERE *ALL* OUR STORIES ARE MIRRORED.
A *SACRIFICE* IS REQUIRED TO HELP HER.
SOMETHING FROM OUR *STORIES* THAT CAN HELP MAKE HER COMPLETE.
WHAT A FUCKING *MESS...*
THE FAIRIES SAY THE PRICE WILL BE *HIGH...*

THUP
SOMEONE *HELP* HIS MAJESTY!
DO *NOT* TOUCH THE WITCH...SHE IS CURSED!
CARRION!
HER SERVANTS HAVE COME!
THEY FEED ON HER BODY!
DON'T TOUCH THEM! THEY'LL TAKE YOU AWAY TOO!
BEWARE! THE HANGING GARDENS HIDE *HUMAN BEINGS* WHO *SOMEHOW* USE MAGIC!
THEY MUST BE SLAVES OF THE WITCH AS WELL!
RRUMMBLEE

CALL LADY DEVERA!
THE *KING* ISN'T MOVING...
SUMMON THE WILD HUNT.
DASH
WHERE IS THE HUNTSMAN?!
THE WITCH HAS BROUGHT *INTRUDERS* WITH HER!

IT'S TOO LATE!
TO THE GROUND!
WROO
AAAGH!
NNGH!

PRRUMMMBLEEE
THERE! THE SKYLIGHT!
FUCKING RUN! DON'T TURN AROUND!
WISSSH
AAAAH!
COUGH COUGH... WHAT... *COUGH*
ARE YOU OK?!
I-I CAN'T FEEL MY ARM ANYMORE!
SSSH
DHARA, WHAT--
SSSH
SSSH
SSSH

DON'T BE AFRAID...
...EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE FINE.
WOOOSH
AUSTRI?!
WOAH... IT ALL WORKED OUT, MAYBE TOO WELL.
YOU INTERESTED IN ESCAPING, DUDE?

KLANG
SPLOOOSH

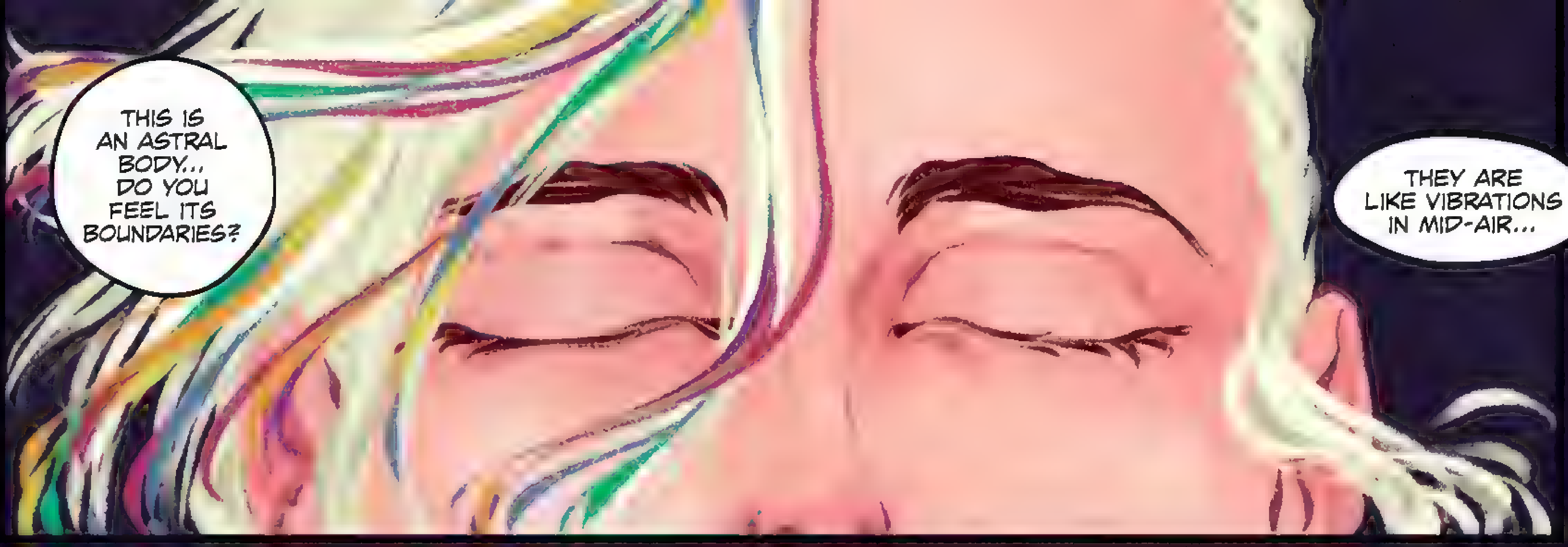
ARCADIA, DAY ONE OF THE NEW ERA.

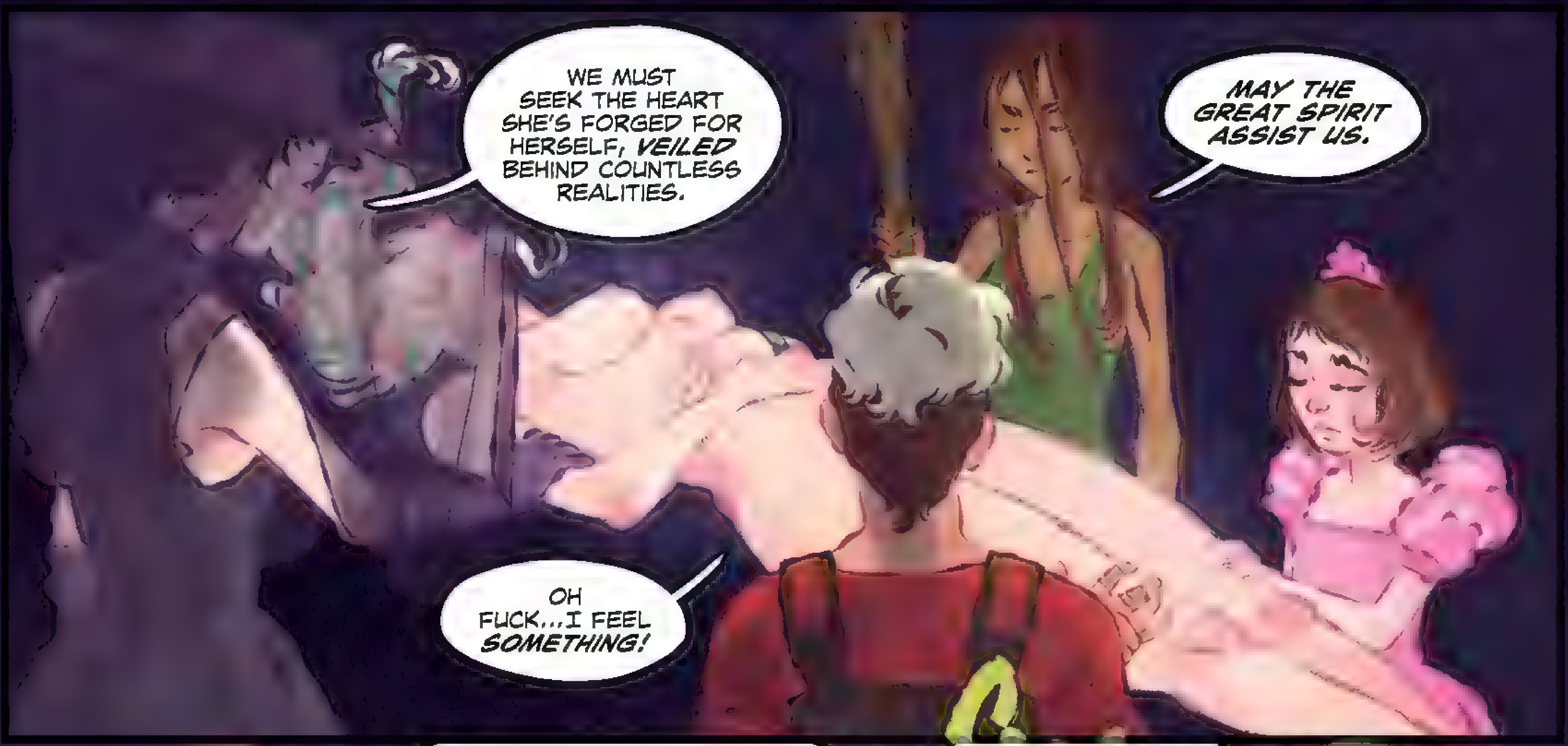
FOLLOW THE *THREAD*, KING TARANIS... DON'T *LEAVE* US.
IF I CAN'T *HEAL* YOU, I CAN *AT LEAST* BUY YOU SOME TIME...
MEDEA IS COMING.
SSSSH
DID THAT WITCH REALLY... *KILL HIM?!*
THE GREEN WHORE!
THE WITCH *DID* MANAGE TO WOUND THE KING. WE NEED TO FIND A WAY *OUT* OF THIS MESS. *NOW.*
MY *MAGIC* WON'T BE ABLE TO HIDE US MUCH LONGER.
UNTIL *YESTERDAY* I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD HIDE US AT ALL!
I DON'T WANT OUT! MRS. MACBETH TOLD US TO WAIT!
I HOPE MACBETH HAS A BACKUP PLAN...OTHERWISE WE'RE *ALL* SCREWED.
LAUREN'S GETTING WORSE...
I THINK *WE'RE* HER BACKUP PLAN.

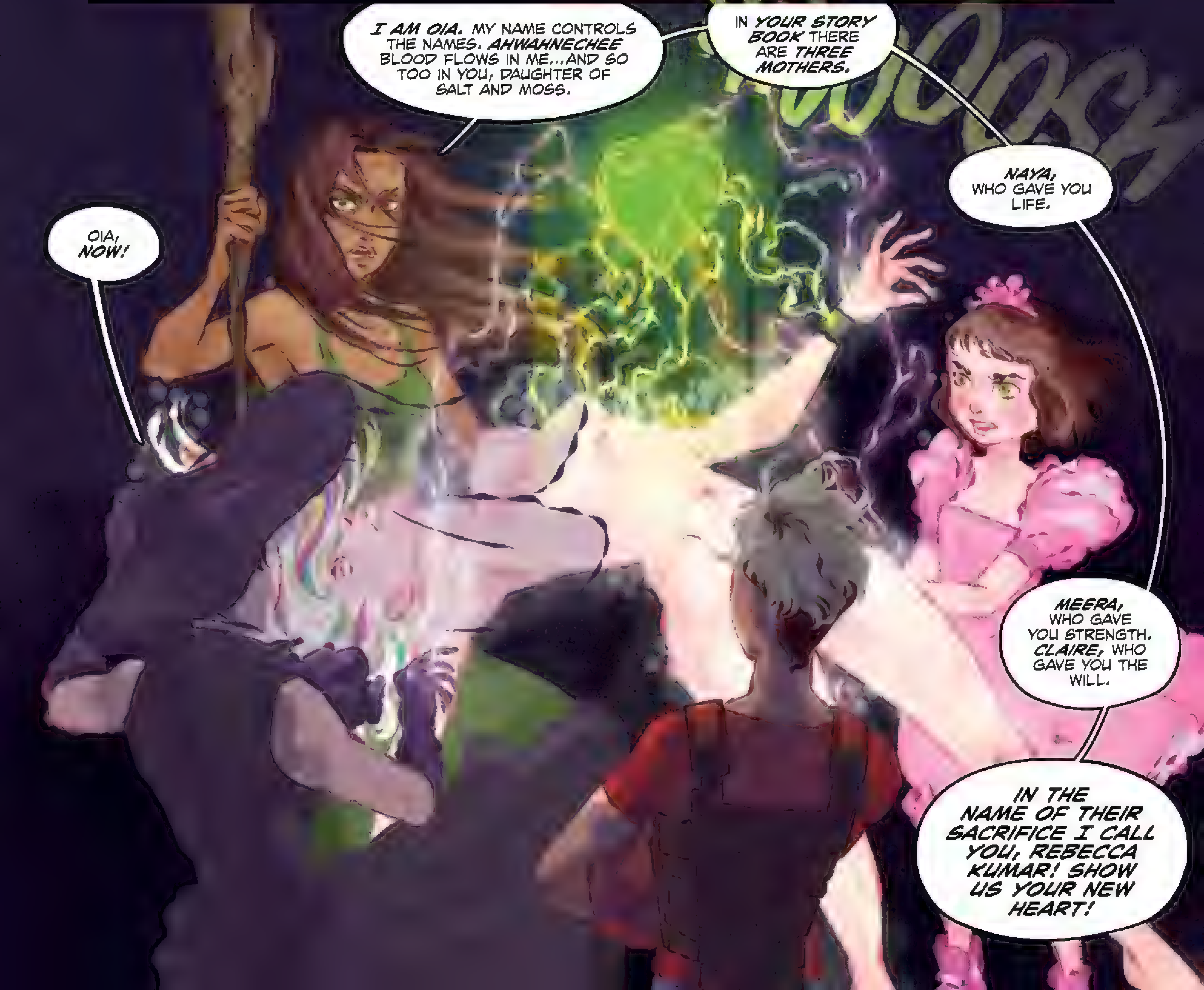
MY SOVEREIGN... I OFFER YOU *THE HEART OF ARCADIA.*
AS LONG AS IT BEATS, YOU WILL NOT BE *ALLOWED* TO DIE.
HERE IT IS, FINALLY...THE FRUIT OF YOUR *SACRIFICE.*
I PLACE *THIS* HEART NEXT TO YOUR OWN...
SO THAT THEY MAY *BEAT* IN UNISON, BEAT *BOUNDLESSLY,* AND BRING...
...POWER!

HERE... THIS MUST BE... WHAT IT MEANS...
...TO BE ARD-Ri, THE SUPREME KING.
SSSSSSH
MY *SUBJECTS*... AN *ERA* HAS ENDED.
THE REIGN OF MORTALS IS OVER.
I OFFER YOU WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DENIED FOR CENTURIES...
NOW! MINGLE WITH THE CROWD!

FSSSSH
WITNESS MY...
...ARCADIA!
I WILL APPOINT NEW PRINCES AND PRINCESSES, WHO WILL IN TURN DIVIDE THEIR FIEFDOMS, NAMING NEW VASSALS TO THEMSELVES...
HERE...TODAY... THE SECRET WE HAVE LONG KEPT DIES.
REVEAL YOURSELVES TO THE WORLD! DEVOUR IT! BE FREE!


THIS IS AN ASTRAL BODY... DO YOU FEEL ITS BOUNDARIES?
THEY ARE LIKE VIBRATIONS IN MID-AIR...


WE MUST SEEK THE HEART SHE'S FORGED FOR HERSELF, *VEILED* BEHIND COUNTLESS REALITIES.
MAY THE GREAT SPIRIT ASSIST US.
OH FUCK...I FEEL *SOMETHING!*


I AM OIA. MY NAME CONTROLS THE NAMES. *AHWAHNECHEE* BLOOD FLOWS IN ME...AND SO TOO IN YOU, DAUGHTER OF SALT AND MOSS.
IN *YOUR STORY BOOK* THERE ARE *THREE MOTHERS.*
WOOOOSH
OIA, *NOW!*
NAYA, WHO GAVE YOU LIFE.
MEERA, WHO GAVE YOU STRENGTH. *CLAIRE,* WHO GAVE YOU THE WILL.
IN THE NAME OF THEIR SACRIFICE I CALL YOU, REBECCA KUMAR! SHOW US YOUR NEW HEART!

THE FAIRIES SAY NOW IS THE TIME FOR SACRIFICE...
PSST
PSST
...THEY SAY SOMEONE IS WATCHING US! A STRANGER!
THERE'S NO TIME! CHOOSE YOUR OFFERING AND SACRIFICE IT FOREVER!
BECKY, I GIVE YOU THE HONOR MY PEOPLE TAUGHT ME...
I WILL LOSE THEIR GUIDANCE, BUT YOU WILL NEVER LOOK DOWN UPON OTHERS!
I GIVE YOU THE COMFORT AND PROTECTION OF SPIRITS...
...I WILL LOSE STILLNESS IN MY HEART, BUT YOU WILL GAIN THEIR SUPPORT.
BECKY I GIVE YOU THE WARM HUG OF MY MOTHERS BEFORE TURNING OFF THE LIGHT!
I WILL BE A LITTLE MORE FRIGHTENED, BUT YOU WILL NEVER BE AFRAID AGAIN!
BECKY, I GIVE YOU THE COURAGE TO FIGHT ALONE!
FROM TODAY ON, I WILL NEED THE HELP OF OTHERS... BUT YOU WILL BE UNSTOPPABLE.
BZZ
BZZ
TUTUM
WE ARE YOUR STORIES!
RETURN TO US, BECKY!

MMM...
ANDREW! ARE YOU HURT?!
NGGH... I DON'T KNOW...
BECKY...
BEFORE ANYONE ELSE SPEAKS...
...I HAVE THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT WE'RE NO LONGER IN MANHATTAN, GUYS.
AAARGH
IT WOULD SEEM...
DHARA!

DHARA!
DASH
I'M HERE!
OH FUCK...
BECKY...I DON'T *UNDERSTAND*... THEY ARE...
THEY *WERE*...
...MY TWO *BOYFRIENDS*.

THEY'RE CALLED RAKIM AND JOELL... WHEN THE WAVE OVERTOOK THEM, THEY TRANSFORMED RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME...
WE HAVE TO LEAVE, DHARA.
I'LL KEEP YOU SAFE. ANDREW AND SOPHIE ARE HERE TOO...
NO, I CAN'T.
HEY, GUYS. LOOK... IT'S DHARA... IT'S ME...

GRAB
MURR MURR
AACK AACK
YOU... YOU DO RECOGNIZE ME...
...I WAS SO WORRIED YOU WOULDN'T...
MMMURRRKRRRK
I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU TWO HERE. I PROMISE.
EXACTLY WHAT AM I SEEING?!
I THINK MY COUSIN IS...ENGAGED TO THOSE TWO?
...THAT, AND WE'VE HAD SOME KIND OF APOCALYPSE AROUND HERE.

IT'S... IT'S JUST LIKE IN AN MMO...
THERE ARE STRANGE CREATURES EVERYWHERE...
COULD THEY BE PEOPLE TOO? TRANSFORMED SOMEHOW BY THE WAVE?
WHY WEREN'T WE AFFECTED?
I KNOW IT SOUNDS ABSURD, BUT BELIEVE ME... I'VE SEEN A LOT OF ABSURD...
ANDREW, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
SOPHIE...
MY REAL NAME IS NOT ANDREW, IT'S ANDREA.
I WAS BORN TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE CALLED BENANDANTI. AN ORDER RAISED TO CONFRONT MOMENTS LIKE... THIS.
FIVE YEARS AGO THEY SENT ME HERE, TO NEW YORK, TO WATCH PEOPLE LIKE YOU, BECKY.
WITCHES.
ANDREW... WHAT? WHY?
GRAROOWL

GROOOWL
WHA--?!
ZASH
SPLOORCH
ANDREW... *YOU KNOW ME.* IT'S ME...IT'S *BECKY.*
IT *IS.* AND YOU *DO* SEEM *DIFFERENT* FROM THE OTHERS, AND... *I LOVE YOU.*
BUT *NOW* IS NOT THE TIME TO TALK ABOUT IT, WE NEED TO GET SOMEWHERE SAFE *RIGHT NOW.*
RIGHT, I'D LIKE AN *AUTOMATIC RIFLE* NOW...
...AND THE *TWO BEASTS* ARE WITH ME.

WAIT! THE BOOKSTORE! MY MOMS! THEY HAD THEIR PRESENTATION TONIGHT!
THEN LET'S GO GET THEM.
IF YOU FIND A WEAPON, TAKE IT. IF YOU'RE ARMED AND COME ACROSS A HOSTILE CREATURE...DO NOT HESITATE.
GUYS--
I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD...
SSSH
DON'T...
LET'S MOVE!
SSSH
DON'T LEAVE ME...
PSSSSH
...DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS.

Chapter 13

DARKFORT, THE ROYAL PALACE.
ARCADIA...
EVERYTHING IS NOW *FINALLY* AS IT WAS *THEN!*
THE *TIME OF STORIES* HAS RETURNED!
YOUR *MAJESTY*... YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN. THE WOUNDS INFLICTED BY THE WITCH'S *CURSE* HAVE YET TO FULLY HEAL...
...SADLY, THEY *NEVER* WILL, DEVERA. *I AM DESTINED TO WALK WITH THEM FOREVER.*
REMAIN WITH MY COURTIERS. DESTROY EVERY CRYSTAL YOU FIND, SO THAT NO ONE MAY AGAIN WEAR SOME ILLUSORY SHADE IN OUR MIDST.
WE MUST ENSURE THAT THAT SECRET IS NEVER MENTIONED AGAIN.

KING TARANIS... WITH THE *RIGHT* SACRIFICE, *I* COULD POTENTIALLY HEAL YOUR WOUNDS...
I'VE HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH OF YOUR MAGIC, MEDEA.
THE *HEART OF ARCADIA* SHOWS ME YOUR RITUAL'S EVERY *IMPERFECTION.*
A RITUAL THAT REQUIRES *TIME!* I *FLOODED* THE SUBWAY TUNNELS WITH POWER, THEREBY CREATING A NEW CIRCULATORY SYSTEM OF *LEY LINES...*
EVEN *NOW,* ARCADIA IS--
INCOMPLETE. DON'T PRETEND YOU'RE UNAWARE. THERE ARE PLACES THAT YET *RESIST* YOUR MAGIC...
...STORY TEMPLES, BOOKSTORES AND LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS AND EVEN... *COMIC SHOPS...* THAT *SURVIVE* IN SPITE OF THE *TRANSFORMATION.*
DO NOT *SHOW* YOURSELF AGAIN UNTIL THE SITUATION IS *RESOLVED.*
ONLY THEN WILL MY DREAM BE COMPLETE.
AS...YOU *COMMAND,* YOUR MAJESTY.

HAZEDANCE CLEARING.
KRA?

WOOOSH
IS IT... NORMAL FOR HER TO BE DOING THIS?!
I DON'T KNOW...HOW WOULD I KNOW?
BECKY'S MAGIC IS ACTUALLY MOVING HER ASTRAL BODY!
SHE LOOKS...ALIVE, SOMEHOW!
SHE... SHE'S GOING TO...

"YOU ARE MISTRESS OF AN INVISIBLE LANGUAGE! *COLORS ARE LIKE NAMES FOR YOU."*
"REBECCA... I FEEL YOUR MAGIC. YOU'VE FINALLY DECIDED TO SAVE YOURSELF."
THE DREAM IS MINE. IT LASTS ONLY A MOMENT, BUT IN IT...I AM FREE.
CREATOR OF CODES...SHE IS THE ONE WHO INVOKES THE ANCESTORS.
MISTRESS OF SYSTEMS... SHE IS THE ONE THAT THE SPIRITS WATCH.
MOTHER OF GLITCHES...SHE IS THE ONE THAT THE DARKNESS DOES NOT FEAR.
HERALD OF ABSTRACTION... SHE IS THE ONE WHO CROSSES LAYERS OF REALITY.
THE WAKE DOES NOT EXIST.

DARKFORT, THE THRONE ROOM.
...AT *LAST*, MEDEA, YOU *FINALLY* CHANGED THE WORLD.
THERE ARE *NO LIMITS* TO YOUR *POWER* NOW.
THIS... HAS BECOME OUR HOME.
MM?
CRICK

CRICK
NOW *NO ONE* HAS TO *HIDE.*
YOU... YOU ARE MEDEA'S *PUPPY,* ARE YOU NOT? THE *RENAMED WARLOCK.*
SHE PROMISED ME YOU'D BE *KEPT* ON A LEASH...
OWAIN, YOUR MAJESTY... AND I *LIVE* TO SERVE YOU.
AH! SO IT'S NOT JUST *HER* THAT HOLDS YOUR LOYALTY...
MY *ENTIRE* EXISTENCE IS A COMPLETE ACT OF *SUBMISSION,* YOUR MAJESTY.
SHE'S *BOUND* A WITCH...WHAT SWEET IRONY-- *NGHH*!!
YOUR MAJESTY! I CAN...
NO! NO MORE WITCHCRAFT!
OUT OF MY WAY.

AS YOU WISH.
PLIC
TAP TAP
ANF ANF
THUD
NGHH--
THUMP

FZZ
FZZ
FZWOOOSH
KRA?!
FWHOOAM
BWHA AAM
KRA?!

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, THE TEMPLE OF DENDUR.
THE KING WAS BEYOND PISSED OFF, AND VERY WEAK. ARE WE SURE HE'LL SURVIVE HIS WOUNDS?
I AM SURE.
THAT WITCH CURSED HIM TO SUFFER UNTHINKABLE PAIN. SHE DIDN'T WANT HIM DEAD, SHE WANTED HIM TO SUFFER.
AS LONG AS THE HEART OF ARCADIA IS IN HIS CHEST, THE KING CANNOT DIE.
BUT HE'LL SPEND ETERNITY IN PERPETUAL AGONY.
AND YOU? WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR IN THE FLAMES?
ALL THE PLACES WHERE MY RITUAL WAS INEFFECTIVE.
YOU HEARD MY WORDS. I USED THE SAME FORMULA THAT ONCE RESTORED YOUTH TO JASON'S FATHER.
THE RITUAL WAS CORRECT...
...BUT IT WAS MANHATTAN, IT WAS THE CITY THAT RESISTED ME.

OUR HOME ON IOS WAS LEFT TOTALLY EMPTY. YOU USED UP ALL OF OUR MAGIC RESERVES.
I KNOW YOU TOOK ALL OF IT TO HOMER'S TOMB BEFORE YOU LEFT...
...AND NOW I ALSO KNOW WHAT YOU WERE HIDING BEHIND YOUR SILENCE. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE WORLDS, MAYBE EVEN CREATE NEW ONES.
YOU ARE GREATER THAN HIM.
HE MAY HOLD THE HEART OF ARCADIA IN HIS CHEST; BUT YOU HAVE A POWER FAR MORE ANCIENT, ONE THAT TOWERS ABOVE HIS OWN.
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FOLLOW HIS ORDERS FOR NOW.
THAT IS WHY I MUST GO ABOUT THIS THE HARD WAY.
I KNOW I PROMISED NOT TO WEAR IT, BUT...
NO! NOT THAT! THAT'S... PLEASE! NO!
YES. REDUCED, ENCHANTED AND PRESERVED. BUT IT IS STILL EXACTLY WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE.
NOW... MAKE ROOM.

AGH... NGGH--
FWHOOOOOM
KRAOOM

GRROOOWL
SO *BE* IT... MY LADY.

WHOM
WHOM
FRUP
GO, BECKY!
GO! FUCK... GO!

FRUSH
FRUSH
HUFF
ANF
ANF
I--I'M HERE...IT WORKED!
...AND WITHOUT A HORCRUX.
IT'S BEATING! I FEEL IT BEATING.
I CAN FEEL IT BEATING!
SO FAST!
THAT'S... THAT'S IT. I...
...I'M FREE.

THIS... THIS ISN'T A DREAM... REALITY IS, EVERYTHING IS...
...IN COLOR.
I CAN SEE THE COLORS!

A HEART TRANSPLANT, COURTESY OF DREAMS...IT WASN'T CRAZY AFTER ALL!
WHEN I THREW MYSELF OUT OF THAT BUILDING... I DREAMED OF REBECCA, BEX, REA AND OIA.
THE DREAM SEEMED LONG... AND STRANGE...YET IT ONLY LASTED A MOMENT.
THEY LOOKED LIKE ME, BUT AT DIFFERENT AGES...EACH ME, BUT TOLD DIFFERENTLY. EACH A STORY... ABOUT MYSELF.
I WORKED FOR MONTHS ON A SYNTHETIC HEART, MIXING MY OWN MAGIC WITH SOME OF THE OLDEST. ARGUING WITH 3D PROGRAMS TO FIND A SIMPLE, COMPATIBLE DESIGN...
THEN, I TRIED AGAIN TO CONTACT MY SISTERS... THROUGH ANCESTORS, DIVINATION, AND DREAMS... I TRIED IT ALL.
ONLY THEY COULD PERFORM THE RITUAL, ONLY THEY COULD COMPLETE THE SYNCHRONIZATION.
BUT YOU TWO...
...YOU TWO AREN'T HERE.
AND NOW... IT'S OVER. I'M SAFE.

MM? AND WHO... ARE YOU?
KRA?
KRA?
BUT THAT'S... THAT'S MY...
OKAY THEN.
I'VE BEEN ALIVE FOR FIVE MINUTES...FIRST, THE WORLD'S IN COLOR, AND THEN AN ALBINO WERECROW HANDS ME BACK THE CELL PHONE I LOST...
...BY DYING, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.
AS EXCUSES GO, DEATH'S A SOLID ONE.
KRA!
DO YOU... CAN YOU UNDERSTAND ME? WHY DO I GET THE FEELING I KNOW YOU SOMEHOW?
CRICK

BZZT
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT'S SO...
FLASH
...FAMILIAR.
BECKY! FINALLY!
MY NAME IS HESUS... I AM KING TARANIS' BROTHER.

Chapter 14

ARCADIA, SWORDCLIFF.
YOU CAN'T STAND THERE DAZED, LOVE. WE HAVE TO GO...
THERE'S NO POINT IN WALLING OURSELVES OFF IN HERE FOREVER.
ONE OF US WILL STAY BEHIND ON GUARD, BUT WE'VE GOT TO FIND *BECKY*.
...AND IF ANYONE TRIES TO STOP US, WE LET LOOSE A SECOND STONEWALL ON THEM.
IT'S...IT'S *TOO* DANGEROUS...
MAYBE IT IS... BUT WE'VE ALL GOT SOMEONE TO LOOK FOR, HERE. WE'LL FIND THE SURVIVORS, THEN WE'LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE... *TOGETHER.*

OKAY, PEOPLE, *EYES OPEN*... AND UNLESS IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH, STAY QUIET.
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO--
GRRR
MAN-EATER.
GRRRRRR
THAT'S WHAT MY NAME MEANS.
AND FINALLY, HERE...IN ARCADIA...
...MY NAME IS MY DESTINY!
ZASH
EVERYONE INSIDE! NOW!

THE HAZEDANCE CLEARING.
IT'S *ABSURD.* IT'S LIKE I KNOW YOU SOMEHOW, ALMOST AS IF YOU'RE... MY BROTHER, OR SOMETHING.
TARANIS IS MY SIBLING... NOT YOU.
I WAS WITH HIM, AT THIS STORY'S BEGINNING...
...WHEN HE DID WHAT HE *DID* TO YOU IN THAT RESTAURANT BATHROOM.
I WAS THERE...BUT I COULDN'T DO *ANYTHING.*
I SAW YOU HIT THE GROUND, WITH NO HEART LEFT.
AND I WAS *CHANGED*...BY *YOUR MAGIC.*
I HAD BEEN SACRIFICED, I WAS CURSED, AND YOU HEALED ME. IT'S... *INCREDIBLE.*
I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU SINCE THEN. I'VE *WITNESSED* EVERY CHAPTER OF YOUR STORY FROM AFAR.
AND NOW, I'VE BROUGHT BACK YOUR *INSTRUMENT. NOW...YOU'RE MY WITCH, BECKY.*

I KNOW I SHOULDN'T TRUST YOU, BUT I NEED ANSWERS.
WHAT THE *FUCK* HAPPENED? *WHERE ARE WE?!*
YOU ARE IN ARCADIA.
WHAT *IS* THIS, LIKE... SOME *SPECIAL LEVEL?* LIKE BACK IN THAT WORLD FULL OF STAIRS?
IF SO, THEN I'M *NOT* REALLY HEALED YET, I'M STILL JUST LOOKING...
...MAGIC! THERE IS MAGIC EVERYWHERE! *TARANIS* TRANSFORMED *MANHATTAN* INTO *ARCADIA* WITH THE ART OF NAMES. IT WAS HIS PLAN FROM THE START.
HE ASKED *MEDEA* FOR HELP...THE LADY OF BLOOD.
THERE IS *ALWAYS* A *HUGE PRICE* TO CHANGING A NAME.
I'VE SEEN TARANIS *SACRIFICE* MAGICAL ITEMS, IMPOSSIBLE INGREDIENTS... EVEN HIS OWN WINGS!
...AND IN THE END, *HE EVEN SACRIFICED US, HIS OWN BROTHERS.*
HE TORE OUT OUR *NAMES,* PULLED OFF OUR *FACES* AND TURNED US INTO LITTLE MORE THAN *BEGGING GHOSTS.*

WHAT A FUCKING MESS... BUT WHATEVER. OKAY...
FIRST I WILL SAVE EVERYONE AND THEN I WILL HUNT DOWN TARANIS.
WHAT HAPPENED TO FER AND LADY MACBETH...?
BEEP
IF WE ALL ENDED UP IN THIS FANTASY WORLD, THEN THE DRUID AND THE OLD HAG HAVE TO BE HERE SOMEWHERE.
I NEED TO FIND THEM, AND IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL GET INTO SOMETHING MORE FUNCTIONAL.
BUT THEY ARE, I MEAN...LADY MACBETH TRULY IS MISSING, I DO NOT FEEL HER HERE IN ARCADIA...
FZZT
...AND AS FOR FER, YOU SAW HIM... TARANIS, HE...I MEAN, FER IS--
DON'T EVEN FUCKING SAY IT.
FER IS STILL ALIVE.
I CHANGED HIS NAME. I'LL FIND A WAY TO INVOKE HIM AGAIN.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, FER...
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU...LOOKING AT...?
GRROAR

GRRRROAR
GO! FIND THE STRONGHOLDS OF MEN!
GRROAR
AS YOU COMMAND, ***MY LADY.***
THAT, THAT WAS...
THAT WAS ***REALLY A...*** I MEAN, A ***REALLY*** BIG...
MEDEA.

THE *MEDEA* THAT *KILLED ME?*
NO OTHER.
THIS IS BAD. MY BROTHER MUST'VE BECOME THE NEW *ARD-RÍ*... THE SUPREME KING, AND GOD OF THIS WORLD.
ME AGAINST A *DRAGON* AND A *GOD*. WELL... *IT CAN ONLY GET BETTER FROM HERE.*
DO NOT BE SO *SURE*, REBECCA KUMAR.
OR DO YOU *NOW* GO BY ONE OF YOUR NEW *NAMES?*
WOULD YOU PREFER *CODE CREATOR*... OR *MISTRESS OF SYSTEMS?*
QUEEN... MAEVE?

DARKFORT, THE GALLERY OF A HUNDRED CROSSROADS.

WELL *ISN'T* THAT... *IRONIC?*
NOW THAT I'VE *CREATED*... A WHOLE NEW WORLD...
...I DON'T KNOW...WHERE *ELSE* TO GO... OR WHAT *ELSE* TO DO...
NGH—
OH, FUCK.

THE NEW YOR
WRAAA
SWHAAAM
FLAP
FLAP
RAAAAAHR
I FOUND A STRONGHOLD, ONE *DIFFERENT* FROM ALL THE OTHERS... *PROTECTED* BY A *SEAL* OF *HECATE*.
POOR LITTLE *LADY MACBETH* AND HER *PATHETIC RITUALS*...
FWHOOOOOOSH
KRAKOOOM
RAAAAAHR

DESTROYING WHAT MY *BELOVED* HAS TRIED FOR SO LONG TO PROTECT IN EVERY WAY...
FLAP
FLAP
THE BARN OWL
...WHAT A SUBLIME *PLEASURE.*
WRAAAAAHR
WROOSH
HOW IS THIS EVEN *POSSIBLE?* SOMETHING'S *HOLDING IT BACK!*
THE BARN OWL
GIRLS! YOU'RE NOT *TARGARYENS!* GET *AWAY* FROM THE *WINDOW!*

FWHOM!
SKRAM
GRRRR
WE NEED TO *ESCAPE* OUT THE BACK, WHILE WE *STILL CAN!*
MAYBE IT IS, BUT IT'S *BETTER* THAN WAITING HERE TO COOK! WE'LL FIGURE THE *REST* OUT ON THE WAY!
BUT IT'S *HELL* OUT THERE!
RAAAAHR
CRACK

HERE IT IS! I *KNEW* IT WAS AROUND HERE, I COULD *FEEL* IT...
BUT THAT--THAT'S A DRAGON!
SKRAAAH
I DON'T THINK I'M READY FOR A DRAGON...
YOU'RE NOT. BUT DON'T WORRY... NOBODY IS.
SOMEONE'S STILL STUCK INSIDE THERE...
THE BUILDING *ITSELF* IS RESISTING. THERE COULD BE *MAGIC* PROTECTING IT.
WE'LL NEED PROTECTION IF THAT DRAGON SEES US. IF IT DOES, WE *DISPERSE*, FAST.
GRRRR
SKRRRR
STOP RIGHT THERE, YOU TWO!
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.
SKRRRR
SKRRRR
GRRRR
I AM A FUCKING *FPS* CHAMPION!
WHAT I WOULDN'T *GIVE* FOR MY *BFG* RIGHT NOW...

GUNS AREN'T GOING TO HELP, SOPHIE. LISTEN, THE BENANDANTI AREN'T THE MARINES, BUT...I WAS BORN DIFFERENT.
HARD AS IT IS TO BELIEVE, I WAS RAISED FOR MOMENTS LIKE THIS.
THE LIBRARY WON'T HOLD FOREVER. I'LL DISTRACT THE BEAST. AS SOON AS THE WAY'S CLEAR, GET EVERYONE OUT THE BACK.
WE HEAR YOU...
...BUT YOU CAN'T FACE A DRAGON ALONE! YOUR PLAN SUCKS!
IT'S NOT JUST THE APOCALYPSE, DHARA! IT'S MY DESTINY! SO LET ME FOCUS!
WE'RE NOT LETTING YOU GO! I CAN'T SHAKE THIS FEELING I'VE HAD, IT'S LIKE...I'VE ALREADY LOST SOMETHING IMPORTANT...
ME TOO! IT'S LIKE SOMEONE GOT LEFT BEHIND...BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER.
NEITHER CAN I, BUT NOW'S NOT THE TIME. AND I WON'T LEAVE YOU BEHIND.
I DRAW THE LAST WARMTH OF THE PREMATURE SUNSET TO ME...
...THE CLASH OF HORNS BETWEEN THE FLASHES OF FIREFLIES...
...THE TRANSIENT GOLD OF CORN BEFORE THE HARVEST...
...AND THE FURIOUS ROAR OF THE STORM MOST FEARED!
SSSSSSH

I WAS BORN WITH THIS ARMOR... AND REBORN ON THIS PATH!
GRROARR
MAY THE *GENIUS LOCI* OF *MANHATTAN* AID US ALL...
TZOK
TZOK
FTHUM
FTHUM
FTHUM

SO, WHAT, NOW YOU'RE A DRAGON, BITCH?
I'M RIDING WITH SEVEN GENERATIONS OF ANCESTORS, ALL READY TO KICK YOUR ASS!

WRAAAH
BWHOM
YOU CAN DO BETTER...
I'VE GOT ALL THE SPIRITS OF MY LINEAGE AT MY BACK...
...AND THEY BROUGHT AN ALMOST *INEXHAUSTIBLE* FONT OF MAGIC WITH THEM.
I'M BACK FROM THE DEAD WITH A ***NEW HEART*** AND ***FULL AWARENESS OF WHO I AM.***
I KNOW EXACTLY HOW YOUR STORIES WORK, NOW. YOU NEED ***ARCHETYPES.*** YOU NEED GOOD AND BAD, YOU NEED PROTAGONISTS... AND ANTAGONISTS...
WHOOOOOOH
YOU'VE SPENT ALL THIS TIME AFRAID THE EVIL WITCH? WELL...

WRAAAA
HERE SHE IS!
WHOOOO
OOOSH
SWOSH

Chapter 15

GRRROWL
SWISH
THUMP
P-PATHETIC.
SSSSSH
SPLOTCH
THIS IS HOW YOU THINK YOU'LL BEAT ME?

DASH
YOU CAN'T DO A DAMN THING AGAINST MY MAGIC...
...I NOW EXIST IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LAYER OF ABSTRACTION! NO ONE COULD HOPE TO ERASE ME FROM THIS REALITY!
FWHOM
TEAR ME APART AS MUCH AS YOU WANT...
...THIS BODY IS NO LONGER ALL THAT I AM!
TZINK
AND YOU'LL BE THE FIRST TO PAY FOR ALL I'VE LOST!

OH, FUCK... BECKY! SHE'S OUT OF CONTROL!
BECKY...?
IF I DON'T STOP HER, SHE'LL GET HERSELF KILLED!
ANDREW!
DASH
BECKY!
DASH
SKREEEEEEEE!
SLASH

THU THUD
AAAANNGHHH!
DASH
SSSUSH
B-BECKY...
N-NO...

BETWEEN THE *DRAGON'S SHRIEKS* AND ALL THIS *SMOKE,* I'M TOTALLY LOST...
...BUT THAT SOUNDED LIKE *ANDREW* SCREAMING...
THAT *GIRL* THAT FLEW PAST... *WAS THAT REALLY BECKY?!*
EVERY TIME I THINK I'VE GOTTEN USED TO THIS MESS... *IT GETS EVEN MORE ABSURD.*
IF *ONLY.* I FEEL LIKE THE FURTHER WE GO, THE MORE *EVERYTHING* SEEMS TO *MAKE SENSE.*
IT'S LIKE A *VIDEO GAME,* YOU KNOW? *WE JUST NEED TO PICK UP THE CONTROLLER AND PLAY.*
I MEAN, ANDREW IS A *MYSTICAL WARRIOR,* OR *SOMETHING* LIKE THAT...
MAGIC WEAPONS, SACRED TATTOOS... ALL THE WHILE, *WE* WERE TAKING *SELFIES...*
THE *TRUTH* IS... ALL I EVER *CARED* ABOUT WAS CLIMBING UP THE *RANKS,* BEING THE LAST SURVIVOR AT THE *BATTLE ROYALE.*
I WANTED TO BE THE *PROTAGONIST.* I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT STUDYING, I LIED TO MY *MOTHER* FOR YEARS.
IT FEELS LIKE *NOW* IS THE *FIRST CHANCE* I'VE HAD *TO BE WHO I AM.*
SOPHIE, I...

NGHK!
FZOT
NOTHING *PERSONAL*.
IT'S JUST, IF I *KILL* YOU, THE *WITCH* WILL LOSE CONTROL...
...AND IF SHE LOSES CONTROL, THIS IS *ALL OVER* IN AN INSTANT.
SOPH... SO...
THUD
SOPHIE!

SKREEEEE
AH! RIGHT...
SLASH
YOU TWO AREN'T *JUST* HUMAN.
YOU'RE *INTERESTING.* YOU'RE STILL *STRONG* ENOUGH TO REMEMBER YOUR *NAMES,* RITUAL OR NOT.
BEST TO LEAVE YOU IN THE *HANDS* OF...
MASTER...
...FAMILIAR SPIRITS.
...YOUR *EVERY* WISH...
...IS *OURS.*

SLASH
DASH
SKRAM
ANF
ANF
ANF
ANF
ZASH
WRAAAH
THAT WAS THE MOMENT IT TRULY BEGAN.

THE STORY HAD CHANGED, AND WAS DISTRIBUTING SCRIPTS FOR ITS NEW ACT.
SKREEEEEEE
KRA
KRA
KRA
KRA
LIKE *THIS*, YOU *LITTLE* BASTARD!
WRAAAAHR
THE ROLES HAD CHANGED TOO. ALL THAT WAS NOW BELOW WAS NOT LIKE IT WAS ABOVE.
THE GREAT WAS NO LONGER REFLECTED IN THE SMALL. NOTHING WAS WHERE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.

KRAK
KRR
KRR
THE ANCIENT LAWS OF MAGIC HAD ALL COLLAPSED.
CRASH
CLAIRE! NO!
AAAAAH!
KRR
KRR
IN THE CHAOS BEFORE THE NEW ORDER, THERE WAS ONLY ROOM FOR POWER... AND SACRIFICE.
EACH CHOICE HAD HEARTBREAKING CONSEQUENCES, AND EVENTS OVERWHELMED US SO QUICKLY WE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE IT HAPPENING.

WHOOSH
RECEPTACLE OF WHAT BURNS AND WHAT PERSISTS...
MALWARE SPAWNED BY THE TEN SACRED TREES... NAME-BREAKING TROJAN FIEND...
IN THAT ETERNAL MOMENT, BEFORE THE END, NO ONE WAS WHAT THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE, OR WHO THEY'D DREAMED OF BECOMING.
ZASH
...I INVOKE YOU!
TZOK
GROW!
WE FOUND OURSELVES ALONE BEFORE THE VOID, AND READY TO JUMP.

GRROARR
BLORB
SO THAT'S WHAT WE DID, WITHOUT LOOKING BACK.
KRASSSSSH

I *WISH* YOU COULD OVERCOME THE BURDEN OF THE *HEART* AND HEAR *IALU*, THE *SONG* THAT CALLS US TO THE *REED FIELD* OF *ETERNITY*.
ME-MEDEA..?
KROOOOOSH
IT...IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE*...
SSSSSSH

MASTER, THE LADY OF BLOOD IS ABOUT TO TAKE HER LEAVE.
THE RED RIVER AWAITS HER.
SHE'S ABOUT TO DEPART...FOR ELSEWHERE.
IT SHOULD BE ME...
NOT SO FAST! I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT I'LL MAKE YOU AN OFFER.
MEDEA'S LIFE FOR THE KING'S. IF TARANIS IS REALLY STILL ALIVE... I WANT TO KNOW WHERE.
...AND STOP USING THOSE ILLUSIONS. WITCHES ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN INVOKE THEIR FAMILIAR SPIRITS.
DID YOU THINK YOU WERE THE ONLY WITCH, REBECCA KUMAR? THE LAST?
LET ME TAKE CARE OF MY FAMILY AND YOU'LL GET TO TAKE CARE OF YOURS.
WUSH
DON'T YOU DARE! ONE STEP CLOSER...
I'M NOT THE ONE TO WORRY ABOUT. YOU DID ALL THIS... BY YOURSELF.
WHAT?!

N-NO...
THEY SAY IF YOU'VE GOT TO JUMP, YOU MIGHT AS WELL JUMP FAR...
SOPHIE...NO... PLEASE...
...BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU JUST KEEP FALLING?

COME *CLOSER*, PATRICK. I COULDN'T *HURT* YOU, EVEN IF I *WANTED* TO.
WHAT HAPPENED? *AUSTRI* HAS CHANGED...AND SO HAVE *YOU*.
IT HURTS, PATRICK...
...I HAVE HAD *MY NAME CHANGED* TOO MANY TIMES.
I BARELY REMEMBER WHO I WAS AT THE BEGINNING. BUT IT WASN'T FOR *NOTHING*.
THEY'RE *ALL* FREE, NOW. *I HALTED THE VERY EXTINCTION OF THE FANTASY.*
THANKS TO *ME*, EVERYTHING EVER IMAGINED, TOLD, WRITTEN AND HANDED DOWN...*WILL NOW LIVE FOREVER.*
AND I... *I WILL NEVER STOP DYING.*
BUT WHERE...WHERE ARE WE?
ARCADIA... MY NEW *KINGDOM*.

THIS IS THE LAND HIDING AT THE EDGES OF EVERY STORY'S PAGE.
WHERE EVERYTHING COMES FROM THE VERY *ESSENCE* OF *NARRATIVE*. MADE *OF* STORIES, MADE *BY* STORIES.
AND EVERY *STORY* NEEDS A *HERO*, EVERY *HERO* NEEDS A *VILLAIN*, A *SHADOW*...
...A WITCH.
REBECCA KUMAR *IS ALIVE*, PATRICK. I FEEL HER IN THE WOUNDS SHE INFLICTED ON ME. AND THIS CAN *MEAN* ONLY ONE THING...
...*WAR*.
END

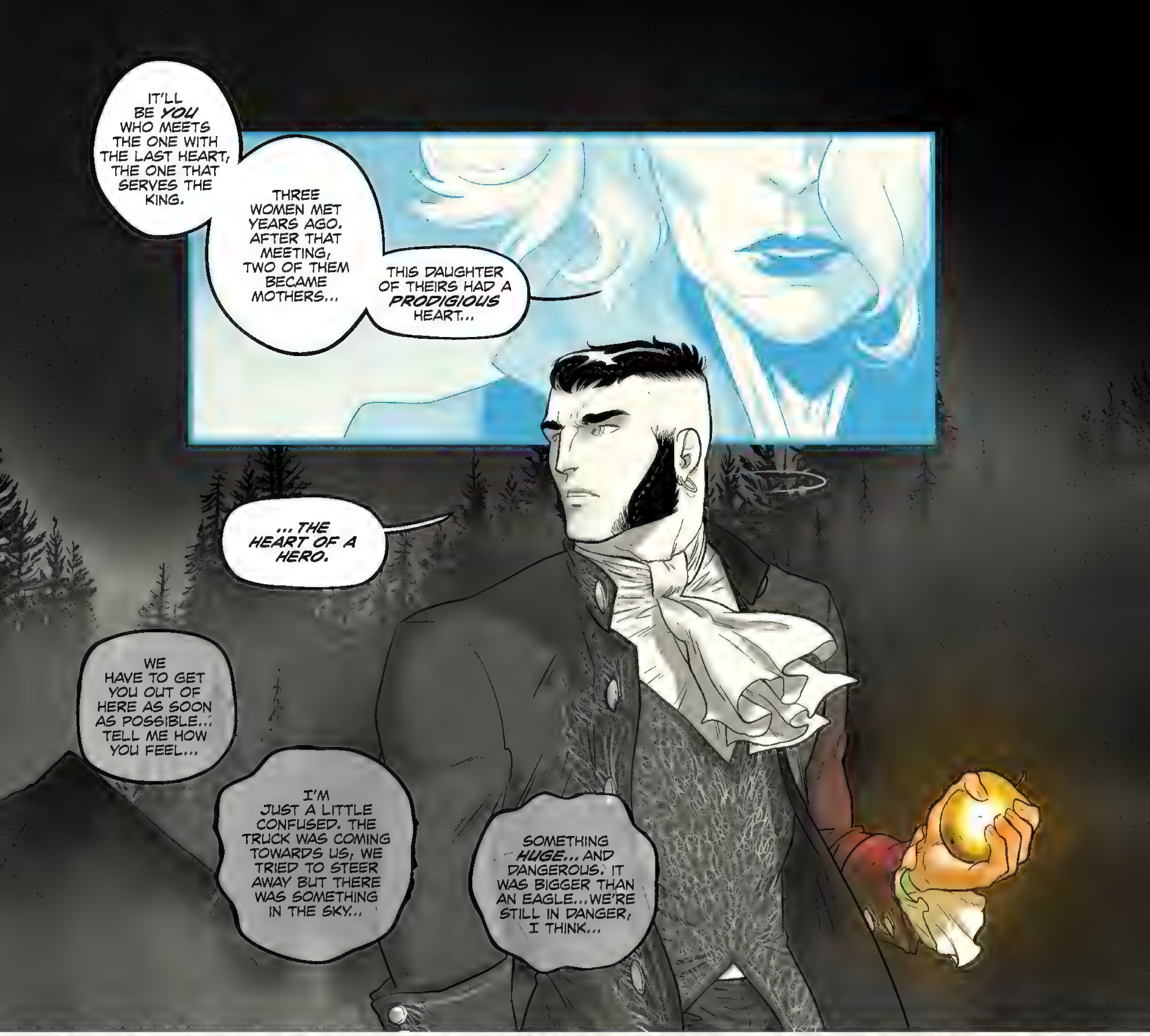
ARCADIA, ROCK OF THE THREE SUNS.
TWO YEARS LATER.
THE *WAR* WAS NOT LONG IN COMING AND SOON OVERWHELMED EVERY REALM.
LOSSES WERE *INCALCULABLE,* ON EVERY FRONT.
THE WITCH GATHERED THE SURVIVING HUMANS AND *DISSIDENT STORIES,* SETTING UP AN OUTPOST WHERE ARCADIAN MAGIC WAS BANISHED.

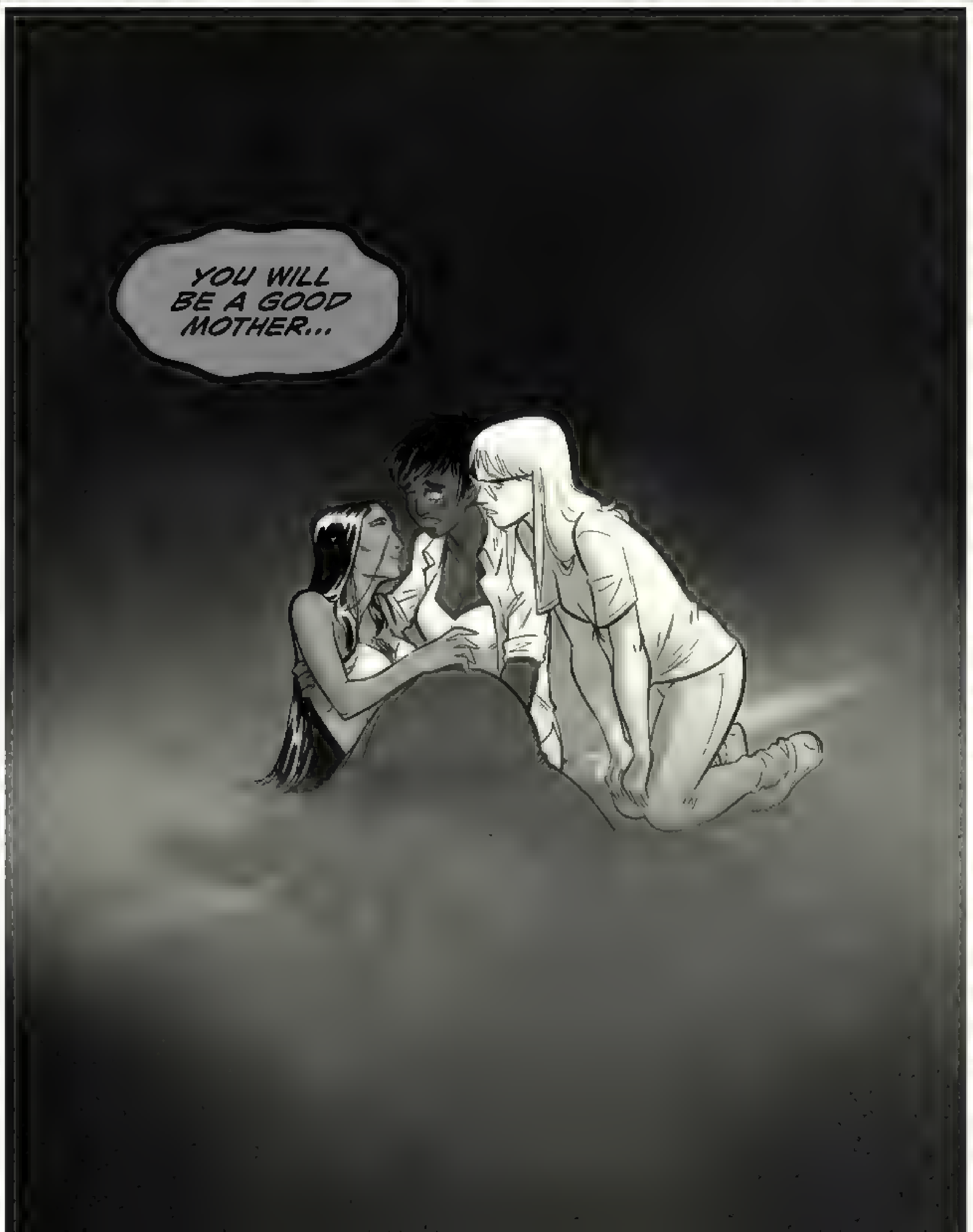
HER **POWER** SEEMED LIMITLESS AS MUCH AS HER **FURY...**
...SO MUCH SO THAT EVEN HER **ALLIES** BEGAN TO FEAR HER.
GIVE ME **YOUR KING** AND ALL THIS WILL **END.**
TO BE CONTINUED IN...
ARCADIA

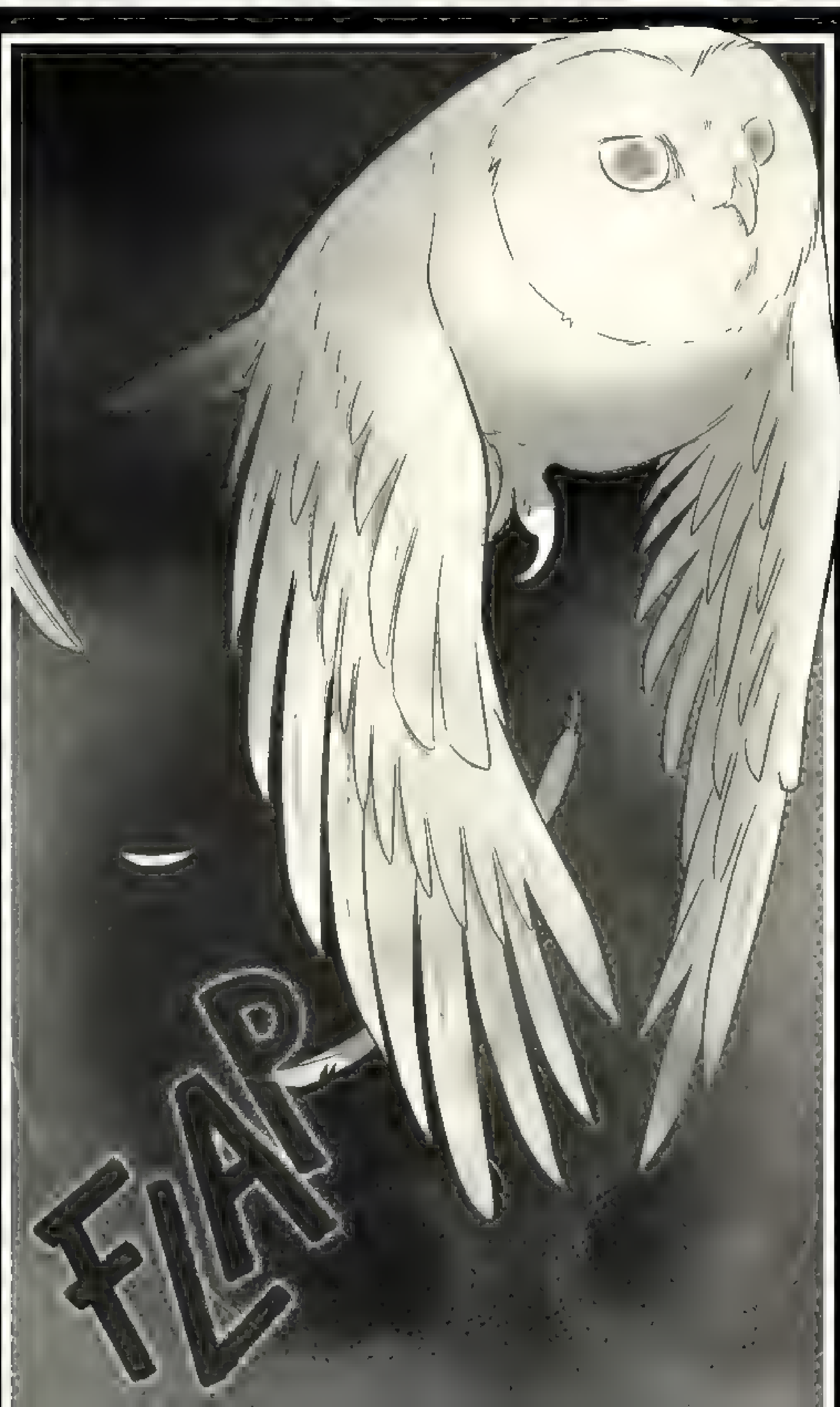
Epilogue

I FORBID YOU TO BETRAY ME, FEAR DOIRICH!
BECKY...
FEAR... CHANGING MY NAME ALMOST WORKED, DIDN'T IT, WITCH?
BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH... IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST, AND SO FAR FROM YOUR STAGE.
YOU COULDN'T DO A DAMN THING TO STOP IT.
I KNOW PEOPLE LIKE YOU. I HAVE SEEN YOU ON THE GROUND... BENT LOW, OVERWHELMED, DEFEATED.
YOU BELIEVE IN THE GOOD FIGHT. BELIEVE THAT, IN THE END, GOOD ALWAYS TRIUMPHS OVER EVIL.
WE KNEW THAT FACING HIM IN HIS OWN HOUSE WOULD BE A GAMBLE. WE TRIED...
...AND WE FAILED.

DYING IS DIFFERENT EVERY TIME. WE NEVER LEAVE FROM THE SAME PLACE, BUT WE *DO* COME BACK.
THIS TIME THOUGH, THEY USED *COLD IRON.* THERE'S NO COMING BACK FROM THAT.
SO WHY IS EVERYTHING HERE SO FULL OF *MAGIC?*
DRAGON'S CLAWS...
I FEEL BECKY'S POWER SINGING INSIDE ME.
IT'S A FAREWELL SONG...A SONG THAT'S ABOUT TO LEAVE ME.
HELLO, BEAST.


IT'LL BE *YOU* WHO MEETS THE ONE WITH THE LAST HEART, THE ONE THAT SERVES THE KING.
THREE WOMEN MET YEARS AGO. AFTER THAT MEETING, TWO OF THEM BECAME MOTHERS...
THIS DAUGHTER OF THEIRS HAD A *PRODIGIOUS* HEART...
...THE HEART OF A HERO.
WE HAVE TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE... TELL ME HOW YOU FEEL...
I'M JUST A LITTLE CONFUSED. THE TRUCK WAS COMING TOWARDS US, WE TRIED TO STEER AWAY BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE SKY...
SOMETHING *HUGE*... AND DANGEROUS. IT WAS BIGGER THAN AN EAGLE... WE'RE STILL IN DANGER, I THINK...


YOU WILL BE A GOOD MOTHER...


FLAP

SKREEEEEEE
FUCK, BECKY. THIS *MESS* OF YOURS STARTED LONG BEFORE YOU WERE BORN...
...AND YOU WERE *NEVER* FREE OF IT.
YOU MADE ME BREAK OUT OF THE KING'S GREENHOUSE. FOR THAT, HE WILL TEAR YOU APART.
NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL YOUR...*OUR* WITCH IS. HE IS A *TRUE MONSTER.* NO ONE CAN CHALLENGE HIM.
HE BELONGS TO THE *BANSHEE*, ACCOMPANIED BY *DEATH*.

THE KING AND THE WITCH... THEY BOTH LOOK SO DIFFERENT, YET *BOTH ARE RELATED TO DEATH.*
FROM HERE EVERYTHING IS SO CLEAR. SO... *SIMPLE.*
IT SEEMS THAT DYING IS AN *INSIGNIFICANT* EVENT.
I WAS AT LEAST HOPING FOR A *GREAT SACRIFICE*... A CHANCE TO TAKE *ONE LAST BASTARD* WITH ME.
INSTEAD, I *DIE* IN A CORRIDOR OF LAND THAT WAS NEVER MINE.
IT WAS SOME *TRIVIAL* ACCIDENT. SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS IN AN INSTANT, LEAVING ONLY THE SLIGHTEST TRACE OF BLOOD ON THE GROUND.

SURE... BUT HOW WILL THEY *REMEMBER* ME IN STORIES IF THEY DON'T KNOW HOW MY STORY *ENDS?*
IT DOESN'T MATTER. EVERYTHING'S GOING AWAY ALREADY ANYWAY.
I'M LIGHTER AND LIGHTER WITH EACH STEP.
THEN... JUST THINK.
CAN YOU HEAR ME, BECKY?
MAYBE SOMEDAY, YOU'LL BE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO FIND THESE SUSPENDED WORDS, FLOATING SOMEWHERE LOST.
YEAH, WELL... IT'S TRUE: I LEFT. BUT DON'T WORRY. THEY'VE DEDICATED MORE FAIRY TALES, SONGS AND EPIC STORIES TO ME THAN TO THAT SPINELESS SIGFRIDO... ***BITCH PLEASE.***
YOU'LL JUST NEED TO FIND A LIBRARY AND READ WHAT I DID WITH THAT BASTARD OF FIONN, UNDER A THOUSAND DIFFERENT FORMS AND NAMES.
YES... ***IT WAS ALWAYS ME.***

I WANT TO SEE YOU FOR WHO YOU REALLY ARE.
BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. AND I KNOW IT'S A BIT OUT OF CHARACTER, BUT IN THE SHORT TIME I HAVE LEFT...
DON'T LOOK FOR A MEANING, DON'T EVEN TRY. SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE SUBJECTED TO ENORMOUS TESTS FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON.
THEY'RE NOT THE LAST OF THEIR LINEAGE, THE FIRST OF A NEW ONE, OR THE FRUIT OF ANCIENT, POWERFUL SPELLS IN HUMAN FORM...
THEY ARE JUST PEOPLE FACED WITH THINGS GREATER THAN THEM. BUT INSTEAD OF BEING CRUSHED BY THE WEIGHT... THEY SURVIVE.
THEY CLING TO LIFE, TOOTH AND NAIL, AND GENERATE A NEW STORY.
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO...
THEY'RE NOT MEANT TO BE, BUT THEY STILL BECOME HEROES.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S POSSIBLE TO BE BOTH ANTAGONIST AND HERO.
BUT PERHAPS, RIGHT NOW... WE NEED BOTH.

GOODBYE, MY WITCH. GOODBYE... BECKY.
MEN HAVE IMAGINED THE AFTERLIFE IN UNDERGROUND CAVES, IMPENETRABLE WOODS, ISLANDS SHROUDED IN MIST, OR UNATTAINABLY HIGH MOUNTAINS.
AND NOW THAT I'M CLOSE TO THE END, I FEEL LIKE ALL OF IT WAS ***TRUE***. THE ***ELSEWHERE*** WAS IN ALL THOSE PLACES AND SO MANY MORE.
CLOSER THAN DREAMS, VISIONS AND FANTASIES. DEATH IS THE INSEPARABLE SHADOW OF EVERY LIVING BEING.
WHY WAS ESCAPING IT SO IMPORTANT? ***WHAT WAS IT THAT SCARED ME SO MUCH?***
SPLASH

AND NOW THE *REAL* FUN BEGINS...
...LET'S SEE IF *EVERYTHING* THEY SAY ABOUT THE OTHER WORLD IS TRUE.
STILL... THEY COULD HAVE AT LEAST MADE IT AN *EASIER CLIMB.*

YOU KNOW...
...NEVERMIND.

YOU TOOK LONG ENOUGH, DRUID!
I ALMOST DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU. BUT THEN AGAIN...
IN EACH OF OUR STORIES, IT'S YOU THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE MOST DIFFERENT.

DEIMNE...
FIONN MAC CUMHAILL, DRUID. THAT'S HOW I'LL BE REMEMBERED... YOU KNOW THAT.
OF COURSE. AND YOU'RE A JERK AS USUAL. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WAITING. I'M WAITING TO HEAR THE PEOPLE COMING FROM THE STAIRS OF PURE FORMS. I'VE BEEN DEAD FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS ALREADY.
IRON? OR...?
WITCHES. IN THE END, THEY TOOK THEIR REVENGE. NO MORE RESURRECTIONS, THEY BANNED ME. DO THEY STILL EXIST IN YOUR TIME?
FEW DO.
ANYWAY, I DIDN'T WANT TO CROSS THE THRESHOLD ALONE... SHALL WE GO, TOGETHER?
JUST LET ME UNDERSTAND FOR A MOMENT... WERE YOU... WAITING FOR ME?

IS THAT SO ABSURD... FOR ONES SUCH AS THE GODS?
HAVE THE WITCHES SO COMPLETELY BURNED YOUR BRAIN?!
HERE...NOW I RECOGNIZE YOU! ALWAYS READY FOR REVENGE, BETRAYAL, DECEIT AND MACHINATIONS. BUT NOW, AT THE END, YOU CAN'T EVEN ADMIT THE OBVIOUS...
WE ARE BOUND.
BOUND... OF COURSE. AS IF ALL I DID WAS TRY TO KILL YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WITHOUT GETTING ANYTHING ELSE DONE!
THE PERFECT ANTAGONIST, RIGHT?
THIS IS HOW WE ARE BOUND!
GRAB
STOP IT. YOU DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO LOOK ME IN THE EYE NOW THAT IT'S ALL OVER.
AFTER ALL THOSE SONGS, FAIRY TALES, AND STORIES...IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US LEFT.
GRAB
IRONIC, ISN'T IT?

I WILL *ALWAYS* HATE YOU.
I KNOW.
FOREVER.
SKREEEEEE
MMM?

SKREEEE
THEN... WE'RE *AGREED?*
AGREED... LET'S GO.

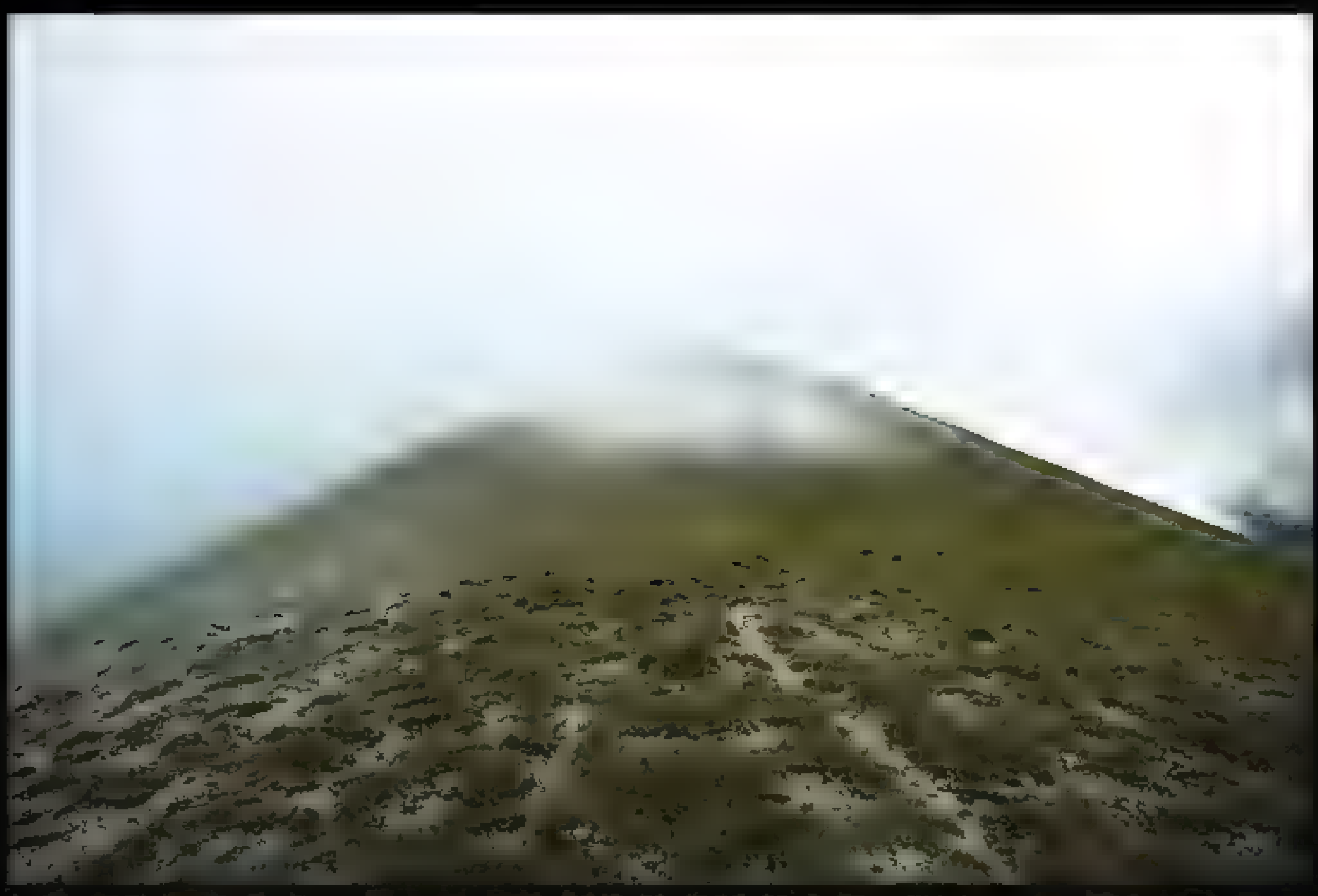
NO MORE SECRETS

or *How Stories Already Won the War Against Reality*

An afterwor(l)d by Marco B Bucci

If you just finished reading this volume, and I guess you have since this is an afterword, after all, you know there's a specific moment in this story arc in which the Secret, the powerful enchantment that kept Stories close, but hidden from our sight, gets shattered. The fact that Manhattan becomes Arcadia, the realm of Stories, might have something to do with it, but we'll get there.

So, we are now all in Arcadia, along with Becky, her friends, and her enemies. We must forget the "real" world in which we were gray and devoid of magic to embrace this new fantasy place, dangerous but also full of adventures and revelations.



There is only one limit to the strength of the ritual with which Medea transformed Manhattan into Arcadia: **the temples of stories.** In bookstores, libraries, comic shops, private collections, and shops that store books, the Naming ritual did not take effect. The love, dedication, and veneration men have for literary works have shielded these places from the powerful transformation. They are intact, as are all who were inside them.

I have never doubted that there is magic in such places and that they must be preserved, visited, and supported. The places where we meet, discover new stories, meet characters we are connected to, or talk to other readers who share a passion for imaginary worlds are sacred. Within them we travel in time, backward in our personal history, distinctly remembering ourselves, who fell in love several times. The strength of Narration is the only one that can oppose that of True Names.

After all, they are two forms of magic that speak the same language.

But more importantly, let's face it: you just read an ending that's not really an ending. Surely it will not have made you breathe that sigh of relief that is usually sought in the last pages of a series. In these last chapters nothing is given away, the plot armors fall apart, and all hope seems lost.

> **Patrick was not saved.**
> **Lady Macbeth is still trapped in her story.**
> **~~Fer Doirich is dead.~~ (wink, wink)**
> **Sophie was killed.**
> **Becky has found herself, but not her heart.**
> **Taranis won, but will suffer forever.**

Defeating Medea didn't give Becky the chance to settle the unfinished business she had with the king, her true opponent. There was no revenge, just fury and magic mixed together. Victory over the dragon will not bring the dead back to life, it will not give peace to anyone. Overwhelmed by power, she has decided to defeat Medea by becoming the villain of this story. **So who is the Hero? Is there anyone really innocent in the NOMEN OMEN saga?**

The answer is simple: I personally don't believe in innocent people, but most of all, I don't believe in simple people. Darkness, anger, fallacy, and weakness belong to everyone to varying degrees. That's why Becky isn't a real hero. I never wanted her to be a hero. I have always dreamed of her as a real person, capable of making mistakes even when history dictates that we do the right thing. We saw her opportunity to be better than her tormentors. It was her time to become, without a doubt, the heroine...yet she failed.

In life, it goes like this: sometimes the wrong thing is done and the value of each of us is not measured by our mistakes, but by the ability to understand them, accept them, and remedy them.

That's why ARCADIA exists! With the change of the True Name of Manhattan, the series needed to change names too. We've had this metamorphosis in mind since the beginning and the time for it has finally come. In this second macro-arc of the saga, we'll follow the life of Becky and Taranis several years after the ending you have just read. A bloody war continues to plague the fantasy world created by Medea's ritual. Becky rules a portion of the surviving human beings while Taranis protects the Incarnate Stories he has sheltered from her fury. Will Becky be able to bring Manhattan back to our reality? Will she finally recover her heart? How far will the conflict go?

Jacopo and I can't wait to embark on this new journey with you that from urban fantasy officially turns into fantasy... urban! ARCADIA Volume I - Mad World was released in Italy in autumn 2020 and at the time of printing this trade, we don't know how and when Arcadia will arrive in the USA. **But it certainly will!**

Now...before I let go of the credits, I would like to spend my last words to thank you who are reading. You have come this far, and this is a magical act, part of a ritual that we shared together and that we hope you will want to conclude with us in Arcadia.

MBB

COVER GALLERY

Issue 9 Variant by KRIS ANKA

Issue 10 Variant by MARCO CHECCHETTO

Issue 11 Variant by MIRKA ANDOLFO

Issue 12 Variant by BALDEMAR RIVAS

Issue 13 Variant by WERTHER DELL'EDERA

Issue 14 Variant by MATTEO SCALERA
Colors by Moreno Dinisio

Issue 15 Variant by PEPE LARRAZ

Pin-up by JACOPO CAMAGNI

Pin-up by JACOPO CAMAGNI

Pin-up by JACOPO CAMAGNI

NOMEN OMEN was a beautiful journey despite having gone through a very delicate period for everyone. One more reason to thank those who made it possible. Let's get started right away!

Thanks to Panini Comics who first believed in this story and in particular to Stefania Simonini, Marco Lupoi, Sara Mattioli, Alessandro Gucciardo, Enrico Ferraresi.

The edition you are holding in your hands would not have been possible without the confidence of the fantastic Image Comics team who gave us the greatest opportunity of all time! And so thanks to Eric Stephenson, Marla Eizik, Kat Salazar, Hilary Diloreto, Drew Gill, Andrew Fitzgerald, Alex Cox, Sasha Head, Heather Doornink, Jeff Boison, Aly Hoffman, Carey Hall, Tricia Ramos, Emilio Bautista, Jon Schlaffman, Briah Skelly, Melissa Gifford, and the wonderful Erika Schnatz! The English adaptation of this series was made possible thanks to the incredible work of Arancia Studio. Thanks therefore to Davide Caci and to the letterer and translator of our hearts Fabio Amelia.

Special thanks go to the great Steve Orlando, Jul Maroh, and Amber Garza. Thanks to the awesome artists that supported us with their art on our variant covers:

Becky Cloonan, Olivier Coipel, Dave Stewart, David "Darko" Lafuente, German Garcia, Simone Di Meo, Sara Pichelli, Giovanna Niro, David López, Matteo Lolli, Brandon Graham, Mahmud Asrar, Matt Wilson, David Nakayama, Mirko Failoni, Kris Anka, Marco Checchetto, Mirka Andolfo, Baldemar Rivas, Werther Dell'Edera, Matteo Scalera, Moreno Dinisio, Pepe Larraz.

The super talented coloring team: Claudio Lucania, Fabio Mancini (who also created a gorgeous variant on issue #6) for his beautifully rendered dream sequences, Stefano Martinuz who colored all the main covers, and last but not least the lovely (and otherworldly patient!) Fabiola Ienne.

But the biggest thanks, as always, goes to our editor Diego Malara. If we reveal how long we've been friends we'd be forced to admit our true age, so we won't. Suffice it to say that in NOMEN OMEN there is a piece of him in our everyday work. Diego is part of the magic. See you beyond the secret!

Thank you all,
Jacopo and Marco

WHOEVER YOU ARE,
WHOEVER YOU WANT TO BE,
ADVENTURE AWAITS

SPECTRUM

THE URBAN FANTASY
TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME FOR 5E,
SET IN THE NOMEN OMEN UNIVERSE

MANA PROJECT
STUDIO

5E

KICKSTARTER
COMING SOON

SUBSCRIBE HERE TO GET
UPDATES ON THIS PROJECT

BIOS

Jacopo Camagni has been working in the comics and illustration industry for over twenty years. In 1998, he drew an original graphic novel dedicated to *Lupin the 3rd* under the supervision of the late Monkey Punch, creator of the character. Ten years later, he began working for Marvel Comics. Since then he's lent his art to some of the most famous characters of the Marvel Universe, such as Longshot, Hawkeye, Deadpool, Deadpool the Duck, the X-Men and Kanan from the *Star Wars* franchise.

Marco B. Bucci, born in 1981, represents a new breed of storyteller. Photographer, designer, illustrator and writer, in 2004 he founded Studio Dronio with Jacopo Camagni, with whom he created *Magna Veritas*, a comic book series published by Soleil in France in 2005. He also wrote the backstory of *Dogs of War*, a CMON Ltd boardgame, and co-created the tabletop RPG *Memento Mori*. In 2018 he co-wrote *Codex Gigas*, a *Memento Mori* companion book that serves as a full-fledged grimoire as well. Today, he juggles his work as a photographer for prestigious fashion labels with his artistic role in the production of role-playing game manuals, and with his work writing comics and novels.

DEATH, REBIRTH AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Becky Kumar is a witch. With the help of Lady Macbeth and Fer Doirich, Guardian of Central Park, the young New Yorker has learned to harness the enormous power that is a part of her legacy. Now, despite miraculously escaping certain death, she finds she is still destined to succumb to plots orchestrated by Taranis Stürmdragon, King of the Manhattan Court—so she decides to stage a counterattack. But on Samhain's night, when Taranis finally reveals his true plan, Becky finds herself facing her enemy alone. The bells are already tolling, and on the twelfth chime... **Becky Kumar will die!**

In this third cataclysmic act of their urban fantasy saga, MARCO B. BUCCI (*Magna Veritas, Memento Mori, Red Bolt*) and JACOPO CAMAGNI (*Captain Marvel*, THE OLD GUARD: TALES THROUGH TIME) break the rules once again: nothing will ever be the same again!

"The surprises in store stick true to the core of this series while leaving us wondering where things will go from here."
—*Monkeys Fighting Robots*

"Bucci and Camagni continue to draw the reader along into deeper realms of dream."
—*You Don't Read Comics*

Collects NOMEN OMEN #11-15
HORROR / FANTASY
RATED **M** / MATURE

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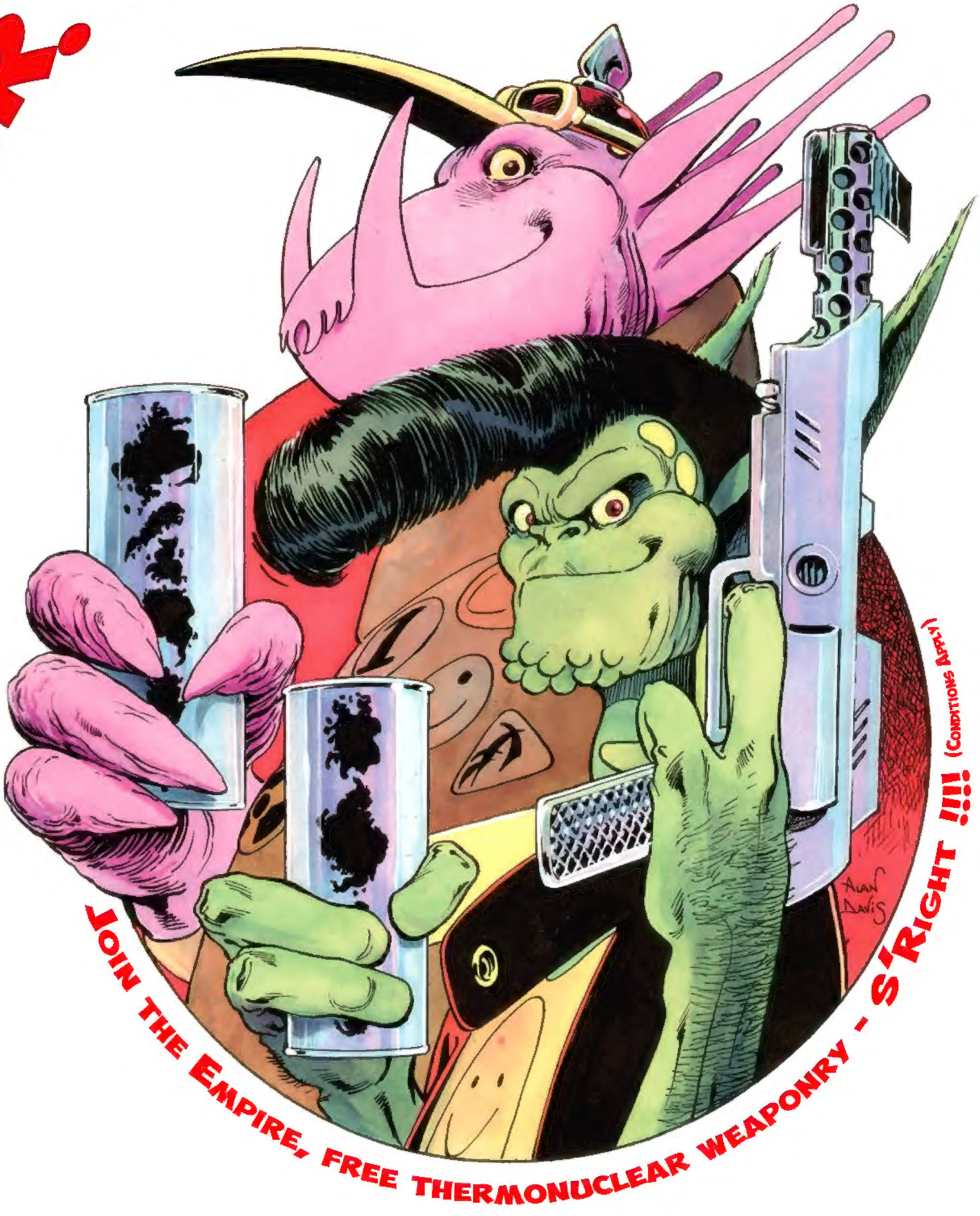
D.R. & QUINCH


ALAN DAVIS
JOIN THE EMPIRE, FREE THERMONUCLEAR WEAPONRY - S'RIGHT !!!! (CONDITIONS APPLY)

K6 NW